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DENIS RAISED THE SLIGHT FORM IN HIS ARMS.

LADY MAY'S COUSIN.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

FAMILY quarrels are at all times unpleasant, and for the most part, lasting; but it is very strange, if we search back for their origin, we shall mostly find it to have been of the most trifling nature. Dickens has immortalised a feud caused by two highly estimable maiden ladies having once been asked to tea when they deemed it their right and due to be bidden to dinner; the occasion of the festivity being, if I mistake not, a christening. My Lady May's relations were at warfare with her father for a far stronger reason. They did not resent not being invited to the christening, since, if they had had their own way, no christening should ever have been needed. The Honourable Thomas Glenarvon,

heir-presumptive to the earldom of Dunmore, quarrelled with his brother when that eccentric nobleman, at the age of forty-five, led to the hymeneal altar a portionless maiden of eighteen. The Honourable Thomas called the Earl by some harsh names on that occasion, "despoiler of children" being of the number.

But harsh words break no bones. Lord and Lady Dunmore went to Paris for their honeymoon without many regrets for the cold shoulder given them by their relations; and the Honourable Thomas and his family, who resided in a fashionable West-end suburb, calmly turned up their noses, and declared no good would come of such an unequal marriage.

Had good come of it! The family feud was well-nigh twenty years old. Lady May had passed her eighteenth birthday before she saw any of her kindred face to face. During all those years the Earl had never returned to England; his wife died before her child could walk alone, and the widower devoted himself heart and soul to little May. They were never

parted even for a day; together they roved through many a foreign land; together they saw all that was most beautiful in all the cities of the Continent, but yet they never visited their native land, and little May had never even heard the names of the august family in Malda Vale, who hated her intensely, because, child as she was, her existence sent out their son and brother from ever reigning at Glenarvon Towers as fourteenth Earl of Dunmore.

It was June—the month of roses—and never had the summer sun shone on a fairer scene than Lord Dunmore's villa in Normandy. He and May had just arrived on the French coast, meaning to pass three or four months in the pleasant, health-giving region.

May was nearly nineteen now, a slight, graceful girl, with masses of soft, chestnut hair, and large, tender violet eyes, which recalled her gentle mother.

She was very pretty, this girl who would some day, Heaven willing, be a countess in her own right; but yet her prettiness was her least

charm. There was a nameless fascination in the fair face, something almost irresistible in the musical voice; no one ever marvelled that May Glenarvon was her father's idol, that her slightest wish was law to the dignified old nobleman.

But yet there was one point in which he did not yield to the wish which shone in her eyes whenever the subject was spoken of. The Earl made no attempt to return to England; once or twice he had made a hasty crossing to Dover, and, strictly *incognito*, spent some weeks at the popular seaside resort, but he did this only that May might see a glimpse of her native land. He never endured the idea of living in England, or making his home even for a short space at one of the grand old estates that called him master.

"This is a pretty place!"

They were sitting in the grounds of the Villa St. Marie; tea was spread on a rustic table under some grand old trees. May, in a white dress, did the honours of the meal; and Lord Dunmore, sitting near in a comfortable easy chair, seemed well satisfied with life, and with things in general.

The shadow which ever since his wife's death had rested on his brow seemed lightened. He glanced at May with all a father's pride, and no spectator could have guessed the awful secret which weighed upon his heart.

"It is lovely," said May, quietly. "I am very glad we came."

"France is your native country, you know, May."

May shook her head.

"Don't say that, papa. I must be English since you are, and I don't believe anyone who lived in England all their life could love it more than I do."

Lord Dunmore sighed.

"And I hate it."

"Hate it, papa!—your own country, where your home is!"

"My home!"

"To be sure," said May, simply. "All these places where we stay are very nice, but they are not our true home. That, of course, is Glenarvon Towers."

Lord Dunmore stared at his child—a strange expression crossed his face, almost as though of pain.

"It can't seem home to you, May. Why, you have never even seen it!"

"I have seen pictures of it," said May, "and Susan has described it to me so often I think I could find my way alone all over it."

Lord Dunmore played with his teaspoon.

"When shall we go there, papa?"

"Where?"

But he knew quite well.

"Home to Glenarvon."

"Never!"

"But—"

"Aren't you happy here, child—happy with me? Ever since your mother died I have devoted myself to you. Have I really made you so miserable, May, that you long for a home you have never seen?"

"I am quite happy," she answered, quickly. "I don't think I have ever had a trouble since I can recollect; only I always thought you meant to go home some time. Susan said we should live in London, and that I must be presented to the Queen."

"Susan is an old simpleton."

"And we are to stay here always?"

"Not here; but I have no intention of taking you to England. Believe me, May, it is for the best."

"I dare say; only—"

"Only what?"

"I am English," said May, simply, "and it seems so strange I should know every European country better than my own, and Susan says—"

"What does she say?"

The girl's voice faltered.

"She says I have a great many relations in England. Oh, papa, I do so long to see them! Fancy having uncles and aunts, just like other people!"

Poor Lord Dunmore! he had dreaded this

moment all his life. He knew the question must come, but he had not expected it so soon.

"Even if we were in England, May, you would see nothing of your relations. I quarrelled with my brother before you were born, and nothing can heal the feud between us."

May was still listening with a startled, troubled expression in her beautiful eyes, when an elderly woman emerged from the house, and came towards them.

She had once been housekeeper at Glenarvon Towers, and nearly twenty years of foreign wandering had not altered the unmistakable English air of her appearance. She still wore a plain black dress, with a snowy handkerchief crossed on her bosom, a lace cap and black ribbons. She had nursed the Countess in her last illness; she had been May's attendant from her very birth.

Mrs. Norton was a very important person in Lord Dunmore's wandering establishment; a loyal, faithful woman, devoted to those she had served for more than half her life, getting in years now, but active and bustling still, despite her snowy hairs and the sixty winters she had lived.

"What is it, Susan?" asked May, quickly; but the old servant did not seem to hear—she addressed herself to her master.

"There's a woman here, my lord, asking to see you."

The Earl smiled.

"I never see beggars. I thought you knew that, Susan. Give her what you think right, and send her off."

"She's not a beggar, my lord."

"I never see strangers."

Susan looked troubled.

"I've told her that, my lord, told it her well-nigh a dozen times; but it's no manner of good. That silly Henri had let her into the hall, and she's sitting on a chair there now, and declares she won't move until she has seen your lordship."

"I shall not see her—she only wants money. It'll be as good to her from your hands as mine."

Susan lowered her voice.

"My lord, I think you had better see her. For your own sake I fear you must!"

The girl May had left them. She stood a little way off, gathering strawberries; they were to all intents alone.

Lord Dunmore wiped his forehead; it was wet with perspiration, as though he had been seized with sudden fright.

"What do you mean?"

"My lord she knows something!"

"Something!—what?"

"I don't know. She told me, my lord, if you would not see her she would go to London and get speech of Mr. Glenarvon. She said he might pay her more to speak than you would to keep silent!"

Lord Dunmore shuddered.

"Who can she be?"

"I don't know. Her face is quite strange to me. But, my lord, I am sure of this one thing—she knows too much for you to lose her!"

The Earl walked wearily back to the house, his last words a request, almost a prayer,—

"Keep her away," pointing to his daughter.

"Susan, I would give my own life to keep this from my child!"

Susan Norton watched him out of sight, with a world of pity upon her honest face.

"He's a peer of England," murmured the faithful old servant to herself, "and I reckon there's many envy him. But if they could know the truth he'd give up all titles, wealth, estates, just for an easy mind. 'Keep it from Lady May,' he said. My poor master, he won't see that a day's coming when all the wealth of the Indies couldn't keep the secret he's held these nineteen years from being common talk. Poor child! it would have been better for her if she'd died with her mamma, and I say it though she's the light of my eyes!"

Susan turned to meet Lady May, and we will follow Lord Dunmore in the house.

It was a very unpretentious place; double-fronted, a verandah running all round the house, and the white stone walls well nigh covered with

clambering roses; a vine stretched its cool green leaves over the porch, and the hall, which was bare, and polished to a dangerous state of shininess, had gay Eastern rugs before the entrance to the rooms, and one or two low rustic chairs beside a small oval table.

On one of these sat a woman dressed in rusty black. She might have been fifty. Her appearance was squalid; it was not honest poverty that had brought her to this state, it was easy to see that—a suspicious whiteness of her lips, a puffiness of face and cheeks, told their own story plainly enough.

Lord Dunmore knew perfectly that his strange visitor had come to extort money from him, and he knew also that she drank.

"I am at a loss to understand the object of your visit," the peer began, gravely.

"I'll make you understand it easily," returned the woman, "but I reckon you'd prefer I shouldn't do it here in this open hall."

Lord Dunmore groaned.

"I must trouble you for your name."

"And you're welcome to that, though I shouldn't have thought you'd have forgotten me. I'd have known you anywhere. I am Mary Pearson, and twenty years ago I was Mary Jones, and in the service of the late Countess of Dunmore."

"Enough," cried the Earl; "follow me. We shall not be disturbed here."

He had opened the door of the library; he closed it again, and led the way into an inner room, where no one ever penetrated but himself without an express invitation. He placed a chair for his unwelcome guest, and said, bitterly,—

"Now say what you have to say; but I expect I can guess your object in coming here. You can have but one—to extort money."

Mrs. Pearson's bold, black eyes moved restlessly round and round the room.

"I expect you're just as rich as you were twenty years ago," she said, coolly.

"My income never changes," was the calm reply.

"And you've kept your secret?"

"I don't know what you allude to."

"Oh, yes, you do. You know when you broke up that pretty establishment in Germany, and kept no one who had ever known you there except that old wretch, Susan Pearson? You paid the servants handsomely; you gave me a thousand pounds, I remember. I was going to America, and you thought, I suppose, it would start me in life. It was a very liberal present to a woman who had only been in your service a few months."

"I believe I gave it you on one condition!"

"Two," corrected the woman, shortly, "that I should hold my tongue, and keep my distance. I've done both for well-nigh twenty years."

"I am quite aware of it."

"Things didn't go well with me out yonder," said Mrs. Pearson, waving her hand towards the garden, as though she supposed America to lie in that direction. "My husband took to drink, and finished himself off. Things were getting worse and worse, when I fell in with a man as knew your brother. I listened to all he had to say, never dropping a word of knowing you, and then I knew America wasn't the place for me. Either you must pay me handsomely to hold my tongue, or I'd ask Mr. Glenarvon his terms if I spoke. Between the two of you, I reckon, I shan't want for a decent living. I've done with work now, and I mean to end my days like a lady."

She came to a sudden stop, fairly breathless after so long a speech. Lord Dunmore had risen, and was pacing the room with eager, restless strides. He had anticipated this moment; for years the thoughts of it had haunted him, waking and sleeping, but now that it had come he felt as totally unprepared for it as though the idea of it had never occurred to him until this summer's day.

It was perfectly true; he was in this woman's power, and not only he but one dearer to him than life itself. This low, sin-stained creature had it in her power to blight the whole future of his darling child. What was he to do? Was it a bare money question? If he despoiled himself

to enrich Mrs. Pearson would she be true to him? Having once received the price of her silence would she keep that silence faithfully?

The woman understood perfectly the thoughts passing through his mind, and at last she said, slowly,—

"If you pay my terms you needn't fear; I'm not going to betray you. A bargain's a bargain, and I'm an honest woman."

Certainly she did not look like one.

The Earl stopped his walk just in front of her, and looked into her face with a strange, searching scrutiny.

"I suppose you have fixed on your terms already? Before ever you came here you knew what you meant to charge for"—he paused, and then added, slowly—"your silence."

"I'd settled that before I left New York. You see, Lord Dunmore, I never had chick nor child of my own, and my husband brought up his young brother to be just like his own son. I couldn't think more of Jem if he were my own boy."

The Earl hardly saw Jem's connection with the matter, unless his advancement in life was the price of Mrs. Pearson's silence. He felt puzzled, but merely inquired, gravely,—

"What are your terms?"

Mrs. Pearson bridled; evidently the supreme moment of her ambition had arrived.

"You're a rich man," she said, positively, "and saving that child I saw in the garden you have no one in the world you care to give your money to."

This was quite true; the Earl never denied it. "I mean to leave all I have to Lady May; no one else has any claim on me."

"You need not call her that to me," said the woman, spitefully. "It's no good keeping up pretences when we're alone, you know."

Lord Dunmore said nothing. His position grew every moment more galling, more humiliating; but he bore his misery bravely, as, indeed, he had borne his secret all these years, and he endured both for the same reason—the sake of his darling May.

"You've no one but her," repeated Mrs. Pearson, sharply, "and I've no one but Jem."

The Earl thought she was growing daft, but he only listened in silence.

"I don't care for much money," she said in curious tone, "but I want Jem to be rich. Three hundred a year 'd keep me quite comfortable to the end of my days, and I don't suppose you'd even feel the loss of it."

"I am perfectly willing to settle three thousand pounds upon you. You can enjoy the interest for your life, and at your death the principal can revert to—to Mr. Pearson."

"Stop a bit," said Mrs. Pearson, sharply; "that'll do for me right enough, but it won't do at all for Jem. He's quite different from me—as fine a young man as you'd find anywhere; and I don't choose for him to wait till I am dead."

"What do you want, then?"

She looked at him sharply; she watched every change in his face as she named her price.

"I mean Jem to be your son-in-law! Let him marry your girl, and you may rest easy. I'll keep your secret all my days."

The veins on the Earl's forehead stood out like thick purple cords; but that she was a woman he could have knocked Mrs. Pearson down for daring to insult his darling.

"Woman, are you mad?"

"No, but you will be if you refuse my terms."

"I refuse them utterly."

"Very well, you'll be the sufferer, I reckon. I must get back to England and see Mr. Glenarvon at once."

Lord Dunmore groaned; he could not doubt she would do just what she said. Mrs. Pearson saw her advantage.

"I don't want to behave unhandsome," she said, in a more civil tone. "I've no ill-will to you nor to the young lady, but I must think of Jem first."

"I will assure his future. I will give him a fortune worthy of my own son," said the Earl.

Mrs. Pearson shook her head.

"It won't do. My boy must marry your girl, or I shall go straight to Mr. Glenarvon."

"You are preposterous in your demands."

"I don't want to be. Jem's away in Chicago. I couldn't get him here directly even if I would. I don't want to hurry you. Pass me your word that before she's one-and-twenty your girl shall marry Jem, and you need never fear your secret escaping my lips."

It was an awful alternative. To accept was two years' respite; but, oh! what a sacrifice! What could the brother of this low, uneducated woman be like? Would it not be better for May to enter a convent, or at least bury herself in some unknown country village? What could be more awful than for her to marry beneath her?

Mrs. Pearson understood the struggle as well as though it had been told her in words.

"Give in," she said, not unkindly. "Law! Jem won't hurt the girl; he's a fine young fellow enough! I'll send for him, and he'll be here in a few months. Then they can have a year or two of sweetheating, and they can be married safe and sound, and no one'll ever guess the secret that has well-nigh crushed the life out of you."

"What is Mr. Pearson?"

"Why, he's just Mr. Pearson. He's five-and-twenty, and as fine a young fellow as you'd find."

"I mean what business does he follow?"

"He's a soldier."

Worse and worse. What could be more unsuitable to a refined, delicately nurtured young heiress than an alliance with a rough private soldier?

"He's sure to get on," said his sister, defiantly. "I shouldn't wonder if he were President of the States before he dies! You'd better think of it, Lord Dunmore. I don't want to be hard on you; I'll give you till to-night to think of it. I shall sleep at the hotel, and not leave till nine to-morrow morning. Now listen." She ticked off the various items on her fingers as though to impress them upon him. "Three hundred a year for me all my days, and your daughter for Jem; a kind welcome when the lad comes to you next year, and a wedding before your daughter's twenty-one! There's no great hardship in that, I think, and you needn't send me any long, legal kind of letter that maybe I couldn't make out. Just write the one word on a blank sheet of paper—yes or no—and I shall understand well enough what it means. One thing more—you'll have to send me your address regularly every month. I don't want you to give me the slip."

Lord Dunmore spent that whole evening shut up alone in his study. About nine he rung his bell and sent for Susan.

"I want you to take this letter with your own hands to the hotel. Don't trust it to anyone, not even Henri. Ask to see Mrs. Pearson, and give it her yourself. It is a matter of life and death."

CHAPTER II.

THAT self-same June evening, which brought so much trouble and grief to the Earl of Dunmore, far from the pleasant villa on the French coast, in a genteel side street of fashionable London was a compact semi-detached residence, to which some years before the Honourable Thomas Glenarvon's family had removed.

Not the Honourable Thomas himself, be it understood. He had taken a longer journey than any to be accomplished, accompanied by worldly goods. Ten years after his quarrel with his brother he found himself on his death-bed. His wife declared there was nothing the matter with him but a cold; the gold-spectacled doctor she called in pronounced the same verdict, but Thomas Glenarvon knew better. He had a fixed certainty he was about to depart to that bourne from whence no traveller returns.

"Denis," he said to his eldest son, who had been a curly-headed urchin in petticoats when Lord Dunmore wronged the whole family by daring to undertake matrimony on his own account. "Denis, do you know I'm going away?"

Denis was fourteen, then a bright-eyed, careless schoolboy. His face grew grave as he bent over his father, whom he loved better than any human creature.

"Don't say that," he pleaded.

"It's true enough. Sit down, lad, I want to talk to you. Where's your mother?"

"Gone to a party with the girls," said Denis, simply; "she does not know how ill you are, or she could not have done it."

Thomas Glenarvon smiled faintly; he rather doubted him.

"I am not sorry to have you alone, Denis, I want to talk to you."

Denis wondered what about! Perhaps his dark eyes asked the question, for his father went on,—

"I suppose you do not remember your uncle?"

"Uncle Wellwyn?"

"No—my only brother, the Earl of Dunmore."

Denis grew astonished, his dark eyes flashed.

"The man who made us poor, who keeps all the property you ought to have? No, father, I can't remember him, and I don't want to."

"Denis," said his father gravely, "who told you that?"

"Mamma; she is always—"

"Hush!" said Mr. Glenarvon, quickly.

"Denis, do you know that now I am on my death-bed the one thing I regret most is my rupture with my brother. I would give half my remaining space of life to shake his hand."

"But papa—"

"You have taken your mother's view, yet you do not generally think with her."

"I thought it was your view, father!"

"Have you ever heard me speak against my brother, Denis?"

"Never, but—"

"I quarrelled with him! I said the cruellest things brother did say to brother; but, Denis, I was led to do this by your mother. Before I die I want you to understand how the feud, as she calls it, came about; and I tell you that Guy never in his life sought to wrong me or mine."

"Ought you to talk so much?" hazarded Denis.

"Talking won't hurt me, and I must tell you. I have a kind of presentiment that some day you will meet your uncle, and I should like you to know the truth."

"There was only a year between us," he began slowly, "and I think no brothers ever loved more than we did. I was twenty-eight when I met your mother, and I think from the first Guy saw how it would be. I was in the army then, and I had a younger son's portion; altogether my income was twelve hundred a year. Your mother was portionless. I was looked on by her friends as a very good match, and we were married."

He paused. Perhaps he was thinking how he could best tell the story to Denis without casting too much blame on the boy's mother.

"Children came to us, our expenses increased, but Guy's generosity was such we still seemed rich. We spent the summer always at the Towers, your mother acting in all respects as though she were its mistress."

"Guy was always making us handsome presents. He seemed unlikely to marry. Denis, by the time you were born your mother had decided he never would marry, and that you were as surely heir to the Earldom of Dunmore as though you had been born Lord Glenarvon."

Denis started.

"But then how did the Earl injure us? I always thought he downright robbed us."

"He did not, Denis. You were four years old when he told me he was engaged; his bride was young and portionless. What right had I to reproach him with that when your mother had been so too? If he chose to marry a girl many years his junior it was no business of ours, but your mother was furious. She had set her hopes of being a countess, of seeing her children my lord and my lady; she raved at Dunmore, she cast evil slanders on his poor young fiancée. I could not go against my wife—I had to choose between her and my brother. Guy was angry,

tor, and so a regular quarrel ensued. We have never spoken since."

"But it seems to me," the boy's sensitive brow flashed, "the Earl did us no harm."

"He simply exercised his right to marry if he pleased. Denis, how I have missed him no one knows—not only his substantial aid, but his kindly sympathy. It has aged me before my time. I am but little over fifty, and yet I seem like an old man through this miserable feud."

"But can't you write to Lord Dunmore?"

He shook his head.

"I must consider your mother. No, Denis, all I want is that you should never cherish an unkind thought towards your uncle; that some day, if fate ever brings you together, you may tell him I loved him to the last."

"Is he at Glenarvon?"

"Oh, no, he is travelling. The Countess died within two years of her marriage. There is but one child—Lady May; I should like to have seen her. I pray Guy may live to see her grow up to womanhood, for, poor child, she has no one else to look to in the whole world."

"Poor little thing."

"I think your mother hates her," went on the invalid. "All the unkind feelings she cherished for the child's mother have descended to the little orphan. Your mother can never forget that this child of eight stands between you and the coronet of Dunmore."

"I don't want it. I would rather be plain Mr. Glenarvon as you have been since you left the army, papa."

"I often wish, for your sake, I never had left. You will be badly off, my boy; we have run into many expenses, and debts have accumulated since the feud. When all is paid there will be nothing but your mother's jointure of eight hundred a-year, and the interest of the sum your godfather gave you for a christening present."

"Who was my godfather?"

"Surely you know that! Your uncle, of course. His present to you was a cheque for five thousand pounds. It is settled on you so that the capital cannot be touched, and as long as you live you have an income of two hundred pounds a-year. I'm glad of it; Denis, I shouldn't like you to be dependent on your mother."

Within a week of that conversation Thomas Glenarvon died. His widow did not even condescend to send an intimation to the Earl. She removed with her children to a smaller house. She would have liked to take Denis from Eton, but her husband had left two trustees to see to his boy's interests, and these gentlemen declared their intention of giving their ward a liberal education. His mother had very little chance of flogging his money at present.

And then ten years sped by, bringing Denis Glenarvon to the age of twenty-four, and finding the family still in the small, semi-detached house, and the six Miss Glenarvons still disengaged and apparently without the least chance of ever becoming otherwise; for the youngest of them was twenty-six, and after that age portionless damsels, undowered by nature with unusual beauty, are apt to become unappropriated goods in the matrimonial market.

It was June. The same evening, when May and her father received a visit from Mrs. Pearson, Denis Glenarvon was in his studio, putting the last touches on a landscape, for after Eton and Oxford days were over the young man had chosen his profession, and stuck to it. He was an artist, and critics said one of great promise. He was a strikingly handsome man, very like his dead father. He was very popular in society; but, only son and brother though he was, in his home circle Denis had little love and appreciation.

It was not his fault. A more dutiful son, a tenderer brother, would have been hard to find; but somehow his ways and thoughts were very different from those of the feminine portion of his family. He hated shams, and, truth to say, Mrs. Glenarvon and her daughters were rather given to these expedients.

Denis took after his father, and the consequence was that since that father's death, despite the fact that he had a mother and six sisters, he had often felt almost alone in the world.

As he put the last touch to his picture he gave

a little sigh—perhaps that there was no one to listen to his dreams of fame and sympathise with them. The sigh was drowned in the rustle of a silken train, and a minute later the door of the studio opened to admit the stately form of Mrs. Glenarvon.

You think, perhaps, she had come to give her son a little cheering conversation, to admire his work. Not a bit of it. She seldom journeyed up the steep staircase which led to the studio, and when she did so the object was a selfish one.

Denis guessed what she wanted, but he placed her a chair respectfully. Her blue silk train floated over the bare boards, her pink head-dress seemed out of place. She was not sixty yet, and she had long ago given up all semblance of mourning for her husband.

"Really, Denis"—her first words were usually a complaint—"you need not have given me the trouble of toiling all this way upstairs. You might have known I wanted to speak to you."

"I should have been down in another hour. I thought you had gone to the opera."

"The box Mrs. Jenkins sent only holds six."

"It was very good-natured of her to send it."

"Oh, I don't know. She owes us a great deal—a tallow-chandler's wife, where would her position in society be if we had not taken her up?"

"Where would the girls' amusements be if she did not provide them? I don't think the generosity is all on our side, mother."

"You always abuse your own family."

"Do I?" a little wearily. "What had you to say to me, mother? I was thinking of going out."

"I want to speak to you,"—she glanced apprehensively at the door—"Denis, I can't go on like this much longer—I am awfully in debt."

"That has been the case a long time, I fear, mother," he said, gravely.

"I heard you had sold that picture," she pointed to the still wet canvas, "is it true?"

"Perfectly. I shall send it to be framed to-morrow. The purchaser is Lord Arundel."

"And he gave you five hundred pounds for it?"

"Indeed!" said Denis, lightly; "confess, mother, my choice of a profession was not such a bad one."

"Denis," she said, feverishly, "you must let me have that money, you really must. With five hundred pounds I could tide over the present."

"I cannot let you have it, mother."

"You must."

"I cannot."

"Say will not."

"Will not, then," he rejoined, fiercely. "It would be of no use; if you go on living at a rate of expenditure much above your income ruin must come."

"It will come if you refuse me this."

"Not if you are prudent."

"What do you call prudent?"

"There is that pretty cottage my father bought in Kent; it would hold you and the girls nicely. Your income would be richer there even after deducting one or two thousands from the principal to pay your debts."

"Denis, you are a monster!"

"I hope not."

"You are my only son, and you won't stretch out a hand to help me."

"Not while your whole life is one gigantic sham, mother. I have helped you, I pay two hundred a year for the use of this garret. Of all the household I am the least studied. I ask you, would any other young man stand the treatment meted out to me here?"

"Go on, abuse your mother; you'll be saying next you want to leave me."

"I think I said that last Christmas. I gave you timely notice then. I mean to abide by it."

"Denis!"

"Mother," and the young man's voice softened, "do give up this reckless extravagance."

"I mean to as soon as the girls are married."

"They are not likely to marry now. Mother, be persuaded; let me refurbish Combe Cottage for you, and make it a comfortable home, then

wind up things here and live in peace and honour."

"Do you mean I live in dishonour here?"

"Is it honourable to incur debts you have no chance of paying?"

"Why not give me the money you would spend on that absurd cottage?"

"It would only be dropping it into the sea. Mother, for my father's sake, be persuaded."

But she shook off his appealing hand.

"I mean to do my duty to my poor girls. I shall not listen to you—you always were a croaker."

"Well, next week you will be rid of me."

And on the twenty-fourth, with a sore heart, Denis Glenarvon removed to a quiet house near Chelsea, where a poverty-stricken widow deemed herself very fortunate to obtain him as a lodger; but Mrs. Glenarvon had not counted on what followed the instant her son was gone. The moment they knew he would not be answerable for their bills Mrs. Glenarvon's tradespeople sent her daily appeals for money; and, greatest humiliation of all, a distress for rent was actually placed in the semi-detached house.

The widow sent a peremptory summons for Denis, and in her bad luck (as she called it) had no alternative but to accept his former offer.

Within a month she and her six girls were settled in the despoiled cottage, her income reduced by one-fourth, but still with a peace to which she had long been a stranger. For henceforward, like Longfellow's village blacksmith, she "could look the whole world in the face," for she "owed not any man."

It had cost Denis nearly the whole of the money he had received for his picture to settle his family in their new home. He had received no thanks, nothing but reproaches, in return, and, young as he was, he felt strangely dispirited and down when he was back in his Chelsea lodgings.

He was getting on in his profession. He had no fears but what he would one day be famous. His mother had coolly told him he had better make over his godfather's present to her and his sisters, for she was sure he had no need of it.

Denis told her gently he could not do so; the money was not his to alienate or dispose of. Then she told him, with a sneer on her face, she supposed he thought of marrying.

"Some country girl, with no style or manners, and not a halfpenny of fortune. You're just like your Uncle Dunmore, and you'll make just such a fool of yourself."

"I don't think you brought my father any fortune," said Denis, stung for once into defending himself, "yet I never heard him called a fool for marrying you."

"You are just like your uncle. There's nothing of the Wellwyns about you, Denis."

Denis kept silent.

"There's my brother, now," went on Mrs. Glenarvon, "with a good two thousand a-year of his own, and no one but Grace to come after him. If you had a grain of common sense, Denis, you'd propose to Grace at once."

"But I don't admire her."

"Perhaps you admire someone else, some theatrical-looking professional model, I dare say!"

Denis bit his lips, and kept silence till he had conquered himself to answer patiently,—

"I have never yet met a woman I should care to marry. I shall not marry until I am in love, and I am very sure I shall never love her."

"What a loss for her!" said his mother, spitefully.

Poor Denis! Mr. Wellwyn was his mother's only brother, and very like her. He had never stretched out a finger to help her in her difficulties.

He never invited one of her six girls to Wellwyn House; but he was at all times gracious to her son. Denis Glenarvon was always a welcome guest at the large red-brick mansion, and both Grace and her parents delighted to see him there.

"The lad's as fine a fellow as ever breathed," the father would say to the mother in the privacy of their own room during a conjugal chat in the dark. "At the worst he'll be a

famous painter, and have a large fortune; at the best he'll be Earl of Dunmore and master of Glenarvon Towers."

"Dear, dear!" responded the wife of his bosom, "is there any chance of that? I'm sure if I'd ha' known I'd have been more friendly to your sister and all those gawky girls."

"That's no consequence," said Wellwyn, loftily. "My sister's day is over. She and the girls 'id be no better off—unless Denis was foolish and helped them; but there's only one child's life between him and the earldom. I often wonder if he ever thinks of it."

"I am sure he does not."

"And is the life a sound one?"

"I can't say. She's a mere slip of a girl, and her mother died in decline. She's been bred up in foreign parts, which looks as though they thought she inherited the disease. I'd like to see Grace a countess well enough; but, earl or no earl, I'd be very glad to have Denis for a son-in-law, and I'd think my girl lucky to have him for a husband."

But Denis showed no signs of wishing her for a wife. He spent a fortnight with his relations very soon after his family's migration to Coombe Cottage, but he never paid his cousin any particular attention, and when he left he expressly said he feared it would be a long time before he returned to Wellwyn House, as he meant to spend the autumn and winter abroad, for professional purposes.

"You'll be a great man yet," said old Wellwyn, shaking him by the hand. "Your father would have been proud of you, Denis, my boy, had he only lived to see you grow up."

"Don't bring home a foreign wife," said his aunt, with a kindly thought of Grace. "It is such a disadvantage to an Englishman, and you know, Denis, artists so often make unlucky marriages."

Denis smiled.

"I don't think there's any danger, aunt; I'm not a ladies' man."

And three days later our hero left London for Harwich, crossed to Antwerp, wandered for some time very pleasantly in Flanders and Belgium, and finally, when the first tints of brown warned the eye of the beginning of autumn, took up his abode in a quaint little German village on the banks of the Rhine which rejoiced in the strange-sounding name of Königsmaag.

The name translated into English means king's maiden, and there was an old legend connected with the place, which said that a beautiful girl had there been offered to an old German monarch as hostage for her father's ransom. She was so lovely and so unhappy, runs the legend, that the king's son fell in love with her. His father set her free; they were married, and took up their abode in a magnificent castle built on the very spot where she had said good-bye to her native land.

Denis had read the legend in a book, and thought the scene would make a fine picture. Already he had decided the scene—the body of rough warriors, the king a little in advance, the maiden led by her father to present to him, in the distance her weeping friends, and at the king's side, already looking at her with tender glances, the prince who was to turn her sorrow into joy.

Denis believed this picture would take the world by storm. He found the exact spot described in the legend—a little knoll surrounded by trees. All trace of the castle had passed away, but that mattered nothing to the artist; it was the scenery he needed, not the ruins. He meant to stay at Königsmaag until his picture was completed all but the heroine. He would not hope to find a face fit for such a character in the obscure little German village.

For, in truth, Königsmaag was so small and so obscure that many people living not fifty miles off ignored its very existence. Just a winding, irregular street, a score or so of picturesque houses, a rustic inn—that was all.

All! Well, not quite. At the end of the village street—almost hidden in a garden well planted with grand old trees—was a house a little better than the rest, a pretty, two-storied building, equal perhaps in size and comfort to an

ordinary eight-roomed English cottage. The place was always let to visitors, and just now Mr. Thomas (Denis always travelled under his second Christian name, so little known to his intimates that few of them knew he had been christened after his father) was informed it was let to an English nobleman and his daughter.

Denis never cared for gossip; the news did not concern him, and was soon forgotten. He devoted himself heart and soul to his picture, and the fact that some fellow-countryman was staying at the Königsmaag, as it was grandiloquently named, was nothing to him. He did not even wonder what charm the quaint, old German village would have for his compatriot.

But he had not been in Königsmaag a fortnight when an accident happened which was to bring him into close intimacy with these compatriots, and link his fate with theirs for ever. It was late September; Denis had sat all day over his painting, and was going home to his modest quarters at the inn in the twilight. He walked quickly on.

Very soon the first part of his great work would be achieved, the beautiful German scenery transferred to his canvas, and his thoughts be free to wander after models for the characters he wished to represent. He was almost lost in thought when a voice fell on his ear, an English voice, and that, as it seemed to him, of some one in distress.

"Help, help!"

He looked up, and saw a respectable, elderly woman coming towards him wringing her hands.

Courteous as ever, Denis raised his hat, and begged to learn what was the matter.

"I have lost my young lady, sir. We had been gathering flowers on the hilltop, and I set down to rest. She promised to be back in a few minutes. That is two hours ago, and I have seen nothing of her."

"She has doubtless gone home."

The woman shook her head.

"She could not have gone home, sir, without passing me. I have been sitting just at the point where the four paths from the hill meet. She must have lost her way on those dreadful moors."

Denis felt alarmed; beyond the mound where he encamped for his painting stretched two or three miles of barren, trackless ground. It was covered with a carpet of heather—nothing else would grow there. There was no beaten track; tourists seldom passed beyond the mound. If a young girl were, indeed, wandering over that wild, barren moorland she had little chance of finding her way in the gathering darkness.

"If you will sit down here," opening his camp-stool, "I can go further and search for your young lady. It is getting late, and no wonder you are frightened at her delay."

"I daren't go home without her. I think it would just kill the master. She is the very light of his eyes. Oh, sir, Heaven bless you for your kindness!"

"You are very welcome."

But his mind mis-gave him as he clambered higher and higher and saw no trace of the missing girl. If he failed to find her it seemed to him she must perish on these moors.

He had almost given up hope, when in the distance he saw something white lying on the ground. A nameless dread filled his heart as he got nearer; he seemed to know by instinct what it was lying so gently there.

To his life's end Denis never forgot that moment. A young girl in the first bloom of womanhood, beautiful with all the loveliness of youth and purity, stretched upon the purple heather, her white dress not whiter than her upturned face.

Very gently Denis knelt down by her side, and taking his flask from his pocket, poured a few drops of wine between her clenched teeth. Another moment, and she opened her eyes—such lovely eyes; they seemed to Denis to read him through and through.

"Where am I?"

"On the moors. I met your maid just now in great distress. I told her you had probably lost your way."

"It was not that."

"What then?"

"I have twisted my foot in a hollow. I can't walk a step. I remember trying to stand, but the pain was so great I fainted."

Denis felt thankful he had found her. Why, she might have lain for hours, perhaps days, undiscovered. Somehow he felt glad she should owe her safety to no one but himself.

"I am so thankful I found you."

"It was very kind of you to come. Poor Susan! she must be very frightened."

"She is, indeed. Even now I do not see how we are to reach her, unless you will allow me to carry you."

She blushed crimson.

"I am far too heavy."

"I can think of no better plan. You see, even if I felt sure of finding this spot again, and ventured to leave you and seek assistance, no carriage could come up this rugged hill, and the darkness would then be complete."

"The carriage will be waiting at the foot of the hill," said the girl, slowly; "but, indeed, I do not like to give you so much trouble."

He waited no further permission. He raised the slight form in his arms, and began his walk to where he had left the old servant waiting. Light as was his burden he had to walk very slowly, for the descent was steep and dangerous. Neither of them spoke. Her soft hair had escaped its coils, and fell in bright waves over his shoulders. She kept her eyes closed, but Denis could see the pure white brow, and admire with an artist's enthusiasm the perfect beauty of the face. The walk was strangely sweet to him, and he almost regretted the moment when they rejoined Susan.

A few words explained all to her, but it seemed to Denis she overrated his services, so intense was her gratitude to him.

"My master will thank you better than I can, sir," she said, with a choked sob, as Denis handed her into the pony-carriage, where he had already placed her young lady. "He will know how to thank you. She is all he has in the world, sir—his only child."

Denis thought a good deal of this adventure over his evening tea.

"They are great people, of course; the woman spoke of her master as 'my lord.' I suppose they are the family from Königsmaag. She has a lovely face; I should like to paint her."

It came on him with a sudden flash that this was the beauty he required for his picture; that just such violet eyes and chestnut hair would be his ideal German heroine.

"Perhaps I may call and inquire for her to-morrow," he thought, as he drained his last cup of tea. "But I dare say I'd better not; they might think it a liberty."

He had hardly finished tea when the sound of horses' hoofs were heard—a carriage was dashing up to the inn. Another moment, and the landlady ushered in a tall, soldierly man, who looked every inch an English nobleman, and carried himself erect and proudly, despite his sixty odd years.

He went straight up to Denis and wrung his hand.

"Sir," he said, in a voice which trembled in spite of his best endeavours, "I have come to thank you, to express a title of the gratitude I owe you. You have this day preserved the only thing I value—my child's life."

"I was only too glad to be of any use. I trust—"

"She is all right," interrupted his listener; "the doctor assures us the sprain will only be a very temporary matter. But, oh! Mr. Thomas, I tremble when I think of what might have happened had you not found her!"

He shuddered even as he spoke. Denis pressed him to be seated, and placed an easy-chair near the stove.

"I must introduce myself," said the visitor, suddenly. "Your name I know already. I am the Earl of Dunmore, and the girl you have saved is my only child, the Lady May Glenarvon."

Denis felt his thoughts fly back through the lapse of years to that last long talk with his

father; it had never been forgotten. Denis had long since learned to think of his uncle from his father's point of view. He was deeply moved to think that at last they stood face to face—that the girl he had saved from death was his own cousin. For one moment he was tempted to reveal himself, then he decided that he had better keep his disguise for the present. He recovered his composure by an effort, and said, simply,—

"I beg your pardon, my lord; the name of Glenarvon is a very familiar one to me."

"You have friends who bear it, perhaps?"

"I had one friend; he was, I think, a near relation of yours—Thomas Glenarvon, once of the —th Regiment."

"He is my brother."

"Was," corrected Denis, gently. "Mr. Glenarvon has been dead these ten years."

"Dead!" the Earl's voice softened strangely. "You don't mean it, really! Tom can't be dead."

"He died, as I told you, about ten years ago. I was very intimate with his family; I was staying in the house when he died."

"They might have sent to me."

"He wished it," said Denis, in a low voice; "boy as I was I remember that. He said the feud between you had been his wife's doing from first to last, and he desired his son, if ever you two should meet, to tell you that he died loving you to the last."

The Earl wiped his eyes.

"It was never Tom's fault," he said, slowly. "His wife was at the bottom of it—a wicked woman that, Mr. Thomas—say, and a cruel one."

Although she was his own mother Denis did not deny this charge. He knew quite well that Mrs. Glenarvon had spoiled her husband's life, just as he knew she would fain have ruined her son's.

"You must come and see us, Mr. Thomas," said the peer, recovering his composure. "There is a double reason now for our being friends. You have saved my daughter's life, and you have brought me a message of reconciliation. You must spend all your leisure with us. May will be delighted to make acquaintance with her preserver."

Denis sat up very late that night thinking. He had taken a great fancy to his uncle—his heart had gone out to Lord Dunmore in that one interview as it had never gone out to the Wellwyns after years of intimacy. He felt that he could look upon the Earl almost as a father, and he would have been delighted at the prospect of winning his friendship but for one misgiving.

Denis was twenty-four. He had come to Königsberg perfectly heart-whole and fancy-free. He had never cared for any woman in his life—what was more, he believed he never should so care. Half-an-hour of May Glenarvon's presence had done its work—it was a case of love at first sight. Before ever he discovered her name and lineage he had known that in all the wide world she was the only one for him.

She was the Lady May, the future Countess of Dunmore! He was a landscape painter, whose utmost exertions would win, perhaps, a tithe of the enormous fortune one day to be hers. He never could be a "suitable" match for his lovely cousin. He was too proud to brook the chance of being called a fortune-hunter—therefore it seemed to him further intercourse with his uncle's heiress could bring him nothing but misery. He would make his pointing an excuse, and see no more of sweet Lady May.

Alas for human prudence and its wise resolutions! Denis went to bed determined to run no danger from his cousin's fascinations. He awoke on a lovely autumnal morning with but one thought, one hope—how soon could he see May again! After all, he argued to himself, the risk was his, the suffering would be his, and his only. He could guard against his secret manfully, and it would be churlish to refuse Lord Dunmore's hospitality. Desire conquered caution, and that very afternoon he set off to call at the Königsberg.

He was received with a hearty welcome. Lord Dunmore and his daughter had that peculiar

gift so precious in a foreign land of making their guests feel at home at once. In an hour's time Denis had forgotten they were strangers. The Earl's voice seemed to recall his boyhood, and the kindly father he had so missed; and as for May, although he had seen three London seasons, and been a favourite with the beauties who had appeared in Belgravia, yet he decided he had never met anyone so fascinating, so captivating, as his little cousin.

Lord Dunmore "took to" Mr. Thomas at once. A reserved and haughty man, who admitted few strangers to his intimacy, he received the young artist at first from simple gratitude, and then, to his own surprise, found the gratitude ripening into affection.

"Your father must be proud of you," he said to Denis once, when he and May had been allowed to inspect the great picture. "I should like to know him, and congratulate him on his son's talents."

Denis sighed.

"My father has been dead for years, Lord Dunmore; and I am, I grieve to confess, anything but a source of pride to my mother. No efforts of mine can convince her that painting is respectable. I honestly think she really believes me to be on a par with the decorator who emblazons the names of tradesmen over their shops, or adorns the sign of a country inn."

"Is it possible?"

"Unfortunately, yes! My poor mother has had many disappointments in her life, and they have tried her sadly; but for that she might have had more sympathy with what she terms my 'folly.'"

"Have you any brothers?"

"No. I have six sisters, though, all older than myself."

"Six sisters?"

"Yes, and unmarried."

Lord Dunmore smiled.

"I think, then, I can guess one of your mother's disappointments. I don't know how it is, but mothers always seem to me to want to get rid of their girls. I can't understand it myself. If I could I would keep my May with me all my life."

His tone showed his sincerity. Denis felt a strange longing to know whether Lady May would approve of such an arrangement. Perhaps his eyes betrayed his question, for the Earl answered,—

"I don't think she would mind either, poor child; but it can't be. We all have our troubles."

This speech was, to say the least, enigmatical. It seemed to suggest that Lady May was engaged, yet there was nothing to colour such an idea—the pretty left hand was bare of rings. Lady May never had a letter, apparently never wrote one, and seemed utterly ignorant of any love save that she bore for her father.

It was easy to see the two were all the world to each other; but as he knew them better Denis perceived that May was not only her father's pride—she was his anxiety. The Earl seemed haunted by some dreadful fear; some secret trouble weighed heavily upon him, and Denis felt by instinct that the fear and trouble both concerned his sweet violet-eyed daughter.

Susan Norton was in his confidence, it was easy to see that. She, too, looked at May sometimes with a strange pity, as though her heart ached for her; but the girl herself was unconscious of their fears. She was fearless and free from sorrow as the little birds, and each day that passed found poor Denis more and more hopelessly in love with her.

Lord Dunmore saw nothing of the romance going on under his very eyes. May in her innocence never guessed what made the world so strangely sweet and fair; but someone else saw all.

Susan Norton had not lived to be middle-aged without acquiring a very keen sight for all that concerned those she loved. She liked the young artist, and she understood his hopes as well as if she had been told them; but she knew also they were all in vain, and she felt that it was only cruel kindness to let him ignore this.

He was working at his picture one mild November day when he saw Lord Dunmore's housekeeper coming towards him. He had almost finished his work for the afternoon, and perhaps he was not sorry to be interrupted. Mrs. Norton was not the rose, but at least she lived near it. She would talk to him of Lady May, and no other subject was so sweet just now to Denis.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Norton. Are you here alone?"

"Yes, sir," returned Susan, quietly. "Lord Dunmore has a headache this afternoon, and my lady is reading to him, and—I wanted to speak to you."

Denis dropped his brush in his surprise at her last words. The old woman's manner was perfectly respectful, and yet he felt she had nothing pleasant to tell him.

"Sit down," he said, good-naturedly. "You must be tired after climbing up this hill, and I am quite ready to hear all you have to say."

"You'll forgive me if I seem to be taking a liberty, sir," she said, gently, "but I feel for Lady May more than many do for their own children. You see, I've brought her up from a baby; her mother died in my arms."

"You may be quite sure I shall not be offended at anything you say," said Denis, kindly. "Anyone can see how well you love Lady May."

"And, sir, love makes one keen-sighted, and I've thought lately you had grown to care for her. It's but natural, seeing you saved her life. But, oh! Mr. Thomas, nothing but harm can come of it, and so I've made bold to come to you and beg you to go away before you break my darling's heart."

"I would never break her heart, Mrs. Norton. Can't you see the danger is mine, not hers?"

Susan shook her head.

"It's not that I mistrust, sir, but I'm afraid for my child. She's not used to gentlemen's society; and what if she grew to care for you?"

Denis flushed crimson.

"Have no fear, I assure you I should not attempt to win Lord Dunmore's heiress. I am only an artist, but I have my pride. No man shall ever have it in his power to call me a fortune-hunter."

"You don't understand," said poor Susan, faintly. "I'll have to speak plainer, only promise me you'll keep the secret. I can trust you, sir!"

"You may trust me safely."

"You're thinking, sir, it was the difference of fortune I meant when I said no good could come of your caring for my lady. It wasn't that I meant; there's a barrier between you no money could get over."

"Perhaps you mean title?" and Denis flushed haughtily.

"If you were a duke, sir, I'd tell you just the same. Lady May is engaged to be married."

"Engaged to be married?"

Each of the words cut Denis to the heart. Only now did he realise that, in spite of all difficulties, he had hoped May might be his.

"She is nineteen," went on Susan, "and she must be married before she's twenty-one. My lord's word is passed; and, oh! Mr. Thomas, more depends on it than you can guess. It would just break her father's heart if she refused to redeem the troth."

A lump came in the young man's throat; he could hardly frame his questions.

"Does she love him?"

"She has never seen him."

In spite of all Denis felt unutterably relieved.

"I can't understand it," he said, in a puzzled tone. "She has never seen him; and yet Lord Dunmore, who is an adoring father, insists upon the marriage! It is unheard of!"

"It is the truth, sir."

"I suppose it is a splendid match!"

"I don't know, sir."

"And will he make her a good husband? Is he worthy of such a wife?"

"I can't say, sir. I have told you, perhaps, more than I ought, only I felt I could trust you; and, sir, you have a strange resemblance to the Glenarvons. I couldn't bear your life should be wrecked without a word of warning."

"And you think this engagement will be carried out! Suppose Lady May disliked her fiancé when they met, what then?" Susan sighed.

"She must marry him, sir. I daren't speak more plainly; there is a secret mixed up in it that I can't tell you. Honour, safety, obedience—all require that Lady May should wed the man of her father's choice; and she will do it, too, even though her own heart should break."

Denis looked straight into the old woman's honest face. He felt she was to be trusted. He knew she had come to him in all kindness.

"Mrs. Norton," he said, "I know you meant well to me, but I can't follow your advice. I will never betray my love; I will never speak a word to May Glenarvon that the whole world, her fiancé among them, might not hear, but I could not go away and leave her; I could not bear to go away while this strange mystery shadowed her fate. Something tells me this man is unworthy of her. Who but a coward would compel a girl he had never seen to promise to marry him? Until Lady May is another's wife I will not lose sight of her. Something whispers to me she may yet need a true heart and honest friendship."

"If it were only friendship, sir!"

"She shall never learn it is aught else. I can trust myself, Mrs. Norton."

"And you are not angry with me, sir?"

"No," said Denis, gravely, "I can't be that; only you have brought me news that seems to crush the very life out of me—the life and hope!"

"You are young," she said, deprecatingly. "You'll get over it, sir, in time."

"I think not. I come of a race who never love twice, Mrs. Norton. Our very motto is, 'Once and for always.'"

He had forgotten his indignation—forgotten that as an old retainer of the Glenarvons she would at once recognise the motto, but was not prepared for the white, startled face she turned upon him as he spoke for her excited answer.

"Sir, for the love of Heaven, tell me what you mean! Have you been deceiving us? Aren't you really Mr. Thomas?"

"I never deceived anyone in my life. I have always travelled under the name of Thomas."

"But your real name—your true name! Oh, I know it before you tell me! I can guess why you brought back my lord's family to my mind."

"It was natural," he said, simply. "I will trust you, Mrs. Norton, and tell you my secret, as you have confided yours to me. I am Denis Glenarvon, Lady May's first cousin!"

And of all replies the one she made was the least expected. She just clasped her hands, and said, faintly,—

"Thank Heaven!"

CHAPTER III.

It was mystery on mystery. Mr. Denis Glenarvon, having made up his mind that in the event of suffering coming from his intercourse with his cousin he should be the one to bear it, gave up nothing of his intimacy with Lord Dunmore and his daughter; and the more he saw of them the more certain he felt that if Mrs. Norton's tale was true May ignored her destiny. It was impossible to believe she could have been as blithe and light-hearted had she known the fate which hung over her.

The Earl was often moody, and at all times sad. It needed no magician to see that a heavy sorrow was crushing him beneath its weight, but May was as bright and joyous as a child.

Just a week from his interview with Susan Norton, and "Mr. Thomas" received an extremely peculiar letter. It was written on cream-laid paper, in somewhat uncertain characters, but its contents were brief and to the purpose.

"I have heard you are wooing Lord Dunmore's daughter. For her sake and your own beware! There is only one man in all the

world whom May Glenarvon may safely marry, and he is in America.—Your well-wisher,

"MARY PEARSON."

Denis was so puzzled by this extraordinary missive that he could not keep his doubts to himself. He felt he must speak to Lord Dunmore.

The opportunity soon came. That very evening, when he was playing chess with the Earl, his inattention and abstracted air attracted Lord Dunmore's notice, and he asked the cause.

"What is the matter with you, Thomas? You are playing abominably to-night."

"I must plead guilty," said Denis, lightly.

"I received a very strange letter this morning, and I can't get it out of my head."

"I hope you have had no bad news."

"I have had no news of any sort—simply a kind of warning—I may almost say a kind of threat."

"From whom?"

"A woman whose name I never even heard to my own knowledge. The letter comes from Mary Pearson."

Crash! Over went the chess-table. The men lay scattered on the floor, and the Earl turned to Mr. Thomas, his face livid with a nameless terror.

"What did she say to you?"

For a moment Denis hesitated, and the old man went on, excitedly,—

"For the love of Heaven tell me! Surely I have a right to ask that much. Did she betray my secret?"

"I will show you the letter," said Denis, simply, "only asking you to remember two things: Mrs. Pearson is a complete stranger to me, and I have never abused the trust you placed in me when you invited me to your house, and made me the companion of your only child."

But Lord Dunmore was not listening. His hand was stretched out for the letter. He seized it almost ferociously, and turned aside to study its contents.

A minute passed—two, three; then he returned Mrs. Pearson's note to its true owner.

"Well!"

Denis looked at him. What did he mean by that short, inquiring monosyllable?

"Well," repeated Lord Dunmore, "what puzzles you? It seems to me the matter is plain enough. Someone has told Mrs. Pearson—wrongly, of course—that you are paying your addresses to my daughter, and she hastens to warn you of Lady May's engagement."

"But is Lady May engaged?"

"Assuredly," said the Earl, speaking still with the same feverish eagerness. "She is betrothed to the brother of your correspondent, a young American captain. I expect him over in the spring."

Whatever fear had troubled the Earl was lulled to rest now.

Denis decided Mrs. Pearson knew the strange secret at which Mrs. Norton had hinted, and his uncle had fancied she betrayed it in this letter.

"I am very much surprised."

"Why?" asked Lord Dunmore, sharply. "She is nearly twenty. Everyone will tell you May is old enough to be married, much more engaged."

"She never speaks of Captain Pearson."

"She is of a reserved disposition."

"She wears no engagement ring."

"I believe it is not an American custom."

The two men looked at each other, and understood their opponent's tactics.

Denis knew that for some unknown reason Lord Dunmore meant his daughter to marry Captain Pearson at any cost.

Her father saw that the man who had saved May's life had learned to love her madly.

The older man was the first to speak.

"I am sorry to seem harsh. Your bravery I can never forget, but I have been rash in throwing you into such close intimacy with my daughter. Until my child is Lady May Pearson I must beg you to cease your visits."

"Can't you trust me?" asked Denis, bitterly.

"If I swear never to speak to her a word of

love surely you will not cut me off from her society!"

"I must."

"Why?"

"Because," Lord Dunmore smiled half sadly, "I must have been blind not to think of it before. Your face and manners are well suited to win a young girl's fancy. For May's own sake I cannot let this intimacy go on."

"But she is engaged; surely you do not doubt my faith?"

"The engagement is one of convenience," Lord Dunmore condescended to explain.

"Is Captain Pearson rich?"

"He has not an enormous fortune. What does that matter? May is an heiress."

"It matters this, that I love her as my own soul. I have to fortune, Lord Dunmore, but I have a clear head and two strong arms. I would work for my wife with the best of weapons, perseverance and good will. Already I have a fair income; in the future I may be rich."

"My daughter is engaged."

"But not—you admit—by her own free will. Oh, Lord Dunmore! have mercy on me. I love her as my own soul. Leave your property to charities, throw it into the sea. I don't want it; all I ask is Lady May. If she came to me without a farthing I should think myself rich to win her. With her by my side I could defy the world."

White as marble had grown the old man's face; he was deeply moved by the appeal made to him. For one instant he hesitated. Would not love such as this secure May's happiness better than wealth and honours if Jem Pearson must be attached to them? For one instant he thought of yielding, then he remembered that he had not to think only of May but of her mother, of his dear, dead wife. All sign of relenting vanished as he recalled this; his voice grew hard and cold.

"You have had your answer, sir."

"Lord Dunmore," pleaded Denis, "only promise me this. If Captain Pearson, after a fair trial, fail to please your daughter, will you then give me a different answer?"

"I cannot."

Denis rose reluctantly; he had spent many pleasant hours in that room, he might never see it again. His brief dream of happiness was dispelled, and yet he felt a strange reluctance to leave the house that sheltered his idol.

"We may not meet again, Lord Dunmore; in another month I shall probably leave Könismagd. Our paths in life are widely severed; only, believe me, I sought your daughter for herself, not for her fortune. Had she lost every penny of it my wishes would have been the same."

Lord Dunmore wrung his hand.

"I am not likely to forget," he said, sadly. "Mr. Thomas, you think me cruel and unjust, but I would have given you a different answer if I could. An awful fate compels me to act as I have done. I can explain nothing, I can tell nothing; only remember this—for well-nigh twenty years my life has been one long pain; for the whole of May's life I have been struggling how to conquer the shadow that rested on my darling's fate and mine."

Another moment and Denis had left the house, wondering a little even in his desolation whether his uncle would ever learn that the lover he had sent away was his own nephew.

Two days passed on—how slowly, how wearily! Then, as he was going home to his quarters at the Tuin, Denis and his cousin met face to face.

It was a lonely spot, little troubled by passers-by; there was not a creature besides the two young people.

May came to a dead stop and held out her hand. Denis could see that she had been crying.

"Won't you speak to me, Mr. Thomas!"

He took her hand and held it in his own; he had much ado to prevent himself from giving her a warmer greeting.

"Papa says you are going away."

"Next week, I think."

"Have we offended you?" she asked, simply.

"You have not been to see us for two days. I

asked papa if he thought you would come to say good-by, and he said no."

"Did he tell you why I stay away?"

"No."

"And can't you guess the reason?"

"Not unless we have offended you."

"I stay away at your father's request; he thinks he was unwise to let me be so often at his house."

"Why?"

"He fears I might desire the greatest treasure he has. Oh, Lady May! he was right, only the warning came too late. Before I knew that you were to be another's I had learned to love you more than aught else on earth."

Her face grew crimson, and yet there was no surprise in the beautiful violet eyes which drooped beneath his gaze.

"You love me!" she breathed, gently; "you love me, Mr. Thomas!"

"Aye."

"And you call me another's! You must be mistaken. I never had a lover," here she blushed again, "in all my life I never seemed to have room for anyone but papa in my heart until a little while ago."

"And now?"

Surely his eyes read her answer; but yet he wanted it in words, and so he persisted.

"And now!" he pleaded, in his rich, musical voice. "And now, May, could you make room there for me?"

Her voice sank to a whisper.

"I think I have loved you ever since—"

"Ever since what, sweetheart?"

"The evening you found me on the moors—when you saved my life."

Denis still held her hands in his. He was in no mind to let her go.

"Do you know that I am a shockingly bad match for you, child?" he said, fondly.

"It doesn't matter!"

"And will you give Captain Pearson his *congé*, and wait until I am rich enough to aspire to be an earl's son-in-law?"

She looked troubled.

"I don't understand! Who is Captain Pearson? I don't know him."

"Have you never heard the name?"

She began to think.

"When we were in Normandy last June a Mrs. Pearson came to see papa. I fancy she was a bad, wicked woman. I know Susan would not let her see me. Papa seemed very sad and troubled after that. But we have heard nothing of her since, only on the first of every month papa sends her money."

"Is she an old woman?"

"I don't know. I think she was papa's servant once. She married and went to America."

"May, there must be some awful mystery in this. Your father told me you were engaged to Captain Pearson, an American officer."

May looked bewildered.

"And weeks ago your old Susan hinted to me your hand was disposed of. I would not accept her warning; I went on believing you free. I might never have given her words a second thought, but that last Monday I had a letter from Mrs. Pearson."

"And she said—"

"She said I must not fall in love with you. I had done that already, though."

"Why not?"

"Because there was but one man you could safely marry, and he was in America."

"There is only one man I shall ever marry," said Lady May decisively, "and he is not in America!"

Surely not, since he stood there at her side, devouring her hand with kisses.

"May, what shall we do?"

"Speak to papa. He never refused me anything I asked him in my life."

"May, darling, I know, I feel he will refuse you this—what then?"

"We can wait!" said May, bravely; "we are both young, and we can trust each other!"

"But Captain Pearson?"

May smiled.

"I cannot marry you without my father's consent," she said, firmly, "but, loving you, I

cannot be anyone else's wife. I shall be May Glenarvon always, dear, until you claim me!"

Denis shivered.

"Child, Heaven grant I have not done you a cruel wrong! I fear, something seems to tell me you have much to bear!"

"To bear!" said May, indignantly. "You don't know my father. Why, he has never given me even a harsh word in all my life."

"I pray I am mistaken!"

"I am sure you are!"

"I think he will force you to marry Captain Pearson, May; I feel it will be so!"

May drew herself up to her full height.

"Can't you trust me?"

"More than anything in the world, only I sorrow for the thought of the trouble I may have brought on your fair head."

She smiled into his eyes.

"You have brought me something else too—happiness! You can't think how sad I have been these two days, thinking I should never see you again!"

"You cared then—"

"Cared!"

"May, will you kiss me!"

"No," she said, gravely, "we are not properly engaged yet, Mr. Thomas; we only mean to wait for each other."

"You must never call me that again!"

"Why not?"

It was on his lips to tell her the name was an assumed one, but he checked himself.

"I don't like 'Mister' from you."

"But I don't know what else to call you!"

He laughed almost in spite of himself.

"Poor little May, to think I should have forgotten that! I was christened Denis dear, and it will sound sweeter to me from your lips than it has ever done before!"

"Denis!" she repeated, shyly. "I like the name. Denis, I must go home; let us say good-bye."

"But where am I to see you? How am I to learn what Lord Dunmore says to your confusion?"

"I will write."

A little silence, then she spoke again,—

"Denis!"

"My own!"

"Are you quite sure?"

"Sure of what, dear?"

(Continued on page 424.)

THE DOCTORS COULD HARDLY BELIEVE A CURE HAD BEEN EFFECTED.

A MOTHER'S INTERESTING STATEMENT.

MRS. E. A. HIGHAM, 58, Brougham Street, West Gorton, near Manchester, relates a most remarkable incident respecting her daughter, who fell and injured her knee so badly that her medical attendants, in consultation, decided that it would be necessary to perform an operation on the knee to replace certain ligaments which had been severely injured and distended. To this the family strongly objected. She was taken to the Southern Hospital, where the combined medical faculty decided it was a case of paralysis of the knee, and that she would doubtless never walk again. She was accordingly discharged as incurable, a confirmed cripple. Some time after this her parents were induced to try St. Jacobs Oil, which greatly benefited her. In a month she began to walk with the aid of a stick, and three weeks later she was able to walk as well as ever, being perfectly cured. The mother did not make the fact known to the proprietors of St. Jacobs Oil for some time, as the doctors told her at the hospital that it would not be a permanent cure; but as the child has continued strong and well ever since she feels perfectly safe in stating that a complete cure has been effected solely and wholly by the use of St. Jacobs Oil. The mother states that the doctors and others who did not think she would ever walk again have called to see her, for they could hardly believe that a cure had been effected.—ADVT.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER.

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CHAPTER X.

THE Darvall family went up to the great metropolis early in May, and installed themselves in a mansion in what we shall term "Upper Cream-street," Mayfair. Their carriages and horses, style of living and staff of servants, made a small stir even in that superb locality; and the new heir to the Darvall name, acres, and hoards in the Three per Cents., soon found swarms of acquaintances flocking round him, like flies round a pot of honey.

It was wonderful to observe the number of people who recollected old Mr. Darvall, or whose fathers, brothers, or uncles had known him intimately, and who were so charmed to renew the acquaintance with another member of the family.

These delightful people were chiefly toothless, bewigged old *roués*, impecunious branches of titled families, heads of the families themselves, or dowagers with trains of marriageable daughters, who were keenly alive to the fact that Mr. Darvall was a widower, and that Mr. and Miss Darvall were likely to give dances, concerts, theatricals, etc.

The county had been a little backward in folding the new-comers to their bosoms. Town made up for this coldness a hundredfold. One acquaintance led to another. Julia's visiting list numbered hundreds; and every afternoon carriages blocked up the street in front of Mr. Darvall's residence, and footmen fought for the bell.

He was not considered *gauche*, ill-mannered, or called "Blue Beard." He was "deliciously original," "charmingly independent," "refreshingly odd!" His figure was commanding and dignified; his expression was impressive, and nothing was said about his squint or his stoop! He was altogether a rough diamond, who gave inimitable dinners, wines of the richest vintages; whose daughter was a handsome, dashing young lady, with a fine fortune in prospect, and one of the best-dressed women in London.

"Papa is going to be noted for his dinners, and I'm going to be celebrated for my dress!" remarked Julia to her maid.

Mary was now promoted to be chief attendant on Miss Darvall—*vice Céleste*, resigned—and she had discarded caps, and was as smart a lady's maid as any one could wish to see.

She had plenty to do, for her mistress went out morning, noon, and night; and all her time at home was spent in dressing, trying on dresses, or holding interviews with milliners—interviews at which she and Mary and the modiste would look as grave and solemn as if it were a Cabinet Council.

Money was no object, but the dresses must be striking, and unlike anyone else's.

After one of these long conferences, and as Mary was adorning her young lady for a grand *fête*, she said,—

"That white and gold brocade body and the tulle skirt dotted with gold butterflies will be a great success, Mary; it fits me like a glove; and with a bouquet of crimson flowers, I shall look my very, very best! I want to turn out particularly well. I mean to conquer Captain Elliot. He is home. I've met him twice. I'm really rather pleased with him!"

"Are you, miss?" said Mary, rather grimly.

"Yes. He is much quieter, though, than I expected—not half such a rattle as I thought he would be. I fancy the Indian sun, and a bullet in his shoulder, have tamed him down; he has a bronzed face, and an interesting air that rather fascinates me. And now the next thing is for me to fascinate him, is it not, Mary?" and she glanced over her shoulder and laughed.

Mary was looking unusually grave. She was stringing beads, and all her mind seemed bent on the chase of these imitation pearls round a cardboard box at the needle's point.

"I believe he is a great admirer of beauty, miss," she said, looking up at last. And, certainly, to Mary's taste, her mistress was a pretty

young woman; her figure sylph-like and graceful (thanks to her dressmaker), with her brilliant teeth, and complexion, and sunny looks.

Mary had not the smallest doubt in her mind that Maxwell Elliot would easily succumb to her charms. Her own feelings with regard to him had undergone such an extraordinary revision that she could not honestly say whether she would feel jealous or not—most likely not. He was now quite indifferent to her. She did not care if she never saw or heard of him again; and she scarcely realised the tie that bound their lives together. So far the chains had not galled her.

Her time had been occupied so completely and engrossingly in trying to make both ends meet that she had no leisure to sit down and indulge in futile retrospection. What was done was done.

She liked her young mistress, who was good-tempered, generous (only Mary's pride revolted against presents) and frank—if anything, too frank. She made confidences to Mary that Mary shrank from—not that they were guilty in any shape or form, merely indiscreet. She showed her mind, her feelings, too nakedly to her, who, after all, was but her handmaiden and inferior; not in that handmaiden's own opinion, though. In her secret heart she felt herself above her employer, despite all her money and titled friends.

After all, what would Miss Darvall be without her fortune? It was merely that that set her above Mary Meadows. Mary had ten times more ladylike instincts than her mistress, Julia.

Julia revelled in outward show. If her dresses were magnificent she was not equally grand in her ideas about less prominent parts of her costume. She was far less dainty about her petticoats and stockings than might have been supposed; far less particular than Mary, her maid, who noted this peculiarity somewhat scornfully. Also Miss Darvall's astonishing knowledge of queer, odd words and slang—also her extraordinary ignorance on many subjects—her vulgarity, if she might dare to think so!

Yes, she looked down on her patroness, and yet she liked her, and never spared time nor trouble on her behalf.

She had gradually worked up from housemaid to sewing-maid, sewing-maid to lady's-maid, and now she was more of a companion and confidante than anything else. She wrote Julia's orders, notes, and finally letters. She went out shopping with her, on foot, or in the carriage; and she was the recipient of all her confidences, and the repository of all her woes or her triumphs. The lack of an invitation to one great house, the sensation she created at another; the speeches that had been made to her, the spiteful things said behind her back, the sweet things whispered in her ear—were all retailed.

It came hard to Mary to listen to long confidences about Maxwell Elliot. Not that she cared for him, but she did care for Julia, and she was resolved not to stand long unmoved, and allow him to commit bigamy!

Bouquets, the size of small haystacks, were handed in, with his card attached. Notes, in his hand, were not infrequent, and he was a prominent man in the Darvall set—was always one of their guests at water-parties, race-parties, and picnics.

Captain Burn entered into everything, *con amore*, so did Julia; they were insatiable for amusement. But Mrs. Martin took her pleasures sadly, and Mr. Darvall almost morosely. He approved of races, though, and laid many bets; and his card-parties had already achieved a name.

People whispered to one another that you could play as high as you liked at Darvall's, and that he had been known to lose three thousand at a sitting, without as much as winking!

Of course he took a house near Windsor for the Ascot week—a charming country place, for which he paid a rent that charmed its needy-titled owner. And this beautiful seat he and his daughter filled from basement to garret with their own particular friends.

Fast young ladies, frisky matrons, smart young men, and eligible elderly bachelors, were among Julia's contingent; gamblers and blacklegs—of course of the most polished description and

quite in society—were Mr. Darvall's reinforcement.

The company made a gay and goodly show, as they sat down to dinner at the "Priory," the day before the races. Captain Elliot was among the guests; and Mary saw him for the first time for two years, gay by chance, as he and a brother officer drove up to the entrance in a dog-cart, and she happened to be looking out of a window upstairs.

That evening he was the theme of Miss Darvall's discourse. She had been ruffled at seeing the set a certain Blanche Stuart was making at him, and delivered her soul very freely to Mary, as she unlaced her gown.

"It was disgusting to see the way she behaved, and how she flattered him and looked at him, and actually asked him to take her out for a walk in the pleasure-grounds in the moonlight."

"And did they go?" inquired her attendant.

"Of course they went, and everyone else too, when they had it put into their heads; and then she insisted on playing billiards afterwards. I must say these English girls don't stick at much; she will propose to him before she has done."

"I don't think it will make much difference what she does," said Mary, thinking it was time to venture some kind of hint. "I don't believe that Captain Elliot will ever marry."

"What nonsense. A young man like him, and the owner of such a property! Of course he will marry, and he is looking out for a wife now! He is going to leave the service; it is preposterous for a man in the army to have so many thousands a year. He told me himself that he was going to retire and settle down at Carnegort. Pray, what does that mean? Why should he settle without a wife?"

"It just means what he says, no more; but I'm sure he will never marry—quite sure," said Mary, doggedly.

"Why?"

"Oh, I can't give you a reason;" it was the last thing she was inclined to do, "but tell me, Miss Julia, candidly, do you really care for him?"

"As to really caring for any one of them, no! I've no more heart than a blind bat, but he would suit me better than others, although he is plain Captain Elliot; and yet he is not plain Captain Elliot; he is very handsome. He is such a gentleman, and I—I fancy a man like that, Mary, for the way I was brought up I saw so few. We were a rough lot where we lived, near Melbourne. Then he sings! I never heard anyone sing so well off the stage: his voice makes me feel quite—quite like crying, and gives me a lump in my throat and all that sort of thing, and he reads poetry so beautifully you can't think."

Mary could imagine it all perfectly. Had he not read "Locksley Hall" and the "Gardener's Daughter" as he lay at her feet in the Danesford woods.

"I'm going to give Blanche Stuart the slip for once. He and I have arranged to take a ramble to-morrow morning before breakfast; it's a shame to lie in bed after seven o'clock such heavenly weather as this, so mind you call me at half-past six with my tea, Mary; and I'll wear white cambric with the pink ribbons, and my rustic hat."

However, the next morning, in spite of her virtuous declaration about early rising, Miss Julia was not inclined to stir, when Mary stood beside her with a cup of tea, and a nice little piece of buttered toast, and reminded her of her previous orders.

"I won't get up," she cried, fretfully. "I should be too done up for the races, to-day; and then there's our dance to-night—never thought of that! No, I must have lots of sleep, or I shall look a perfect wreck. I suppose I must send him a note; bring my blotter here, and I'll scribble a line."

The blotter was brought, and the lines scribbled; it was as follows:—

"DEAR CAPTAIN ELIOT,—

"I'm really too lazy to stir, so you must excuse me for once. I send this note to

you by my pretty maid—the one I told you about. Mind you take a good look at her, and tell me what you think of her by-and-by."

"Yours very sincerely, "JULIA."

"Here, Mary," as she folded it up, "you take it down and give it up to him. You will find him at the gate of the garden, or in the big fruit greenhouse."

"I take it, miss? Won't it do just as well to send it by the footman?" rejoined Mary, in dismay.

"Send my notes all over the place by a footman. No, thank you, Mary. I have not quite lost my senses. Run away with it at once. Don't keep him waiting, and, for goodness sake, don't bother me."

So saying, Miss Julia turned her face to the wall, and intimated that the subject was done with, and that she was going to sleep.

Mary went downstairs, irresolute what to do, but ere she reached the big entrance hall she made up her mind that she would take the note herself and brazen it out. She and he must meet before long, when he went down to Carnegort and the family returned after the season to The Place. She might as well get the first awkward edge of their encounter over at once; in short—now.

Captain Elliot had found it a horrible bore rising at half-past six, but how could he disappoint a lady who made the assignment with her own lips? He was not a scrap in love with Miss Darvall.

She was a lively, dashing, good-humoured girl, with a good skin, and fine teeth. He was asked very often to her father's house, and he went partly and principally because he had nothing better to do. It all came in the day's work—this round of the season—races, dances, dinners, theatres, breakfasts, weddings, luncheons, and "teas." When it was all over he would go down to Carnegort for the shooting; the shooting-time was prime—no coverts in the county better than his own.

But how was he to live with that female Mor-decai, as it were, at his gates—that thorn in his flesh—his unacknowledged wife—the Gardener's Daughter!

What a fool he had been—what a fool! His conscience pricked him in behalf of her; he had behaved badly in that business from first to last. However, he had been completely cured of falling in love—the burnt child dreads the fire, and latterly he had given the fire, as representing the fair sex, a very wide berth indeed.

The ordinary civilities of society, and social amenities, that meant nothing (no, bouquets had no meaning nowadays), were the outside of his attentions to Miss Darvall or anyone else. He talked nonsense to her and others, but they knew very well, or ought to know, that it was nonsense. Besides, he must make it up with Mary.

He had been waiting three minutes at the gates—they seemed ten, and had passed on to the big greenhouse, cursing his folly for not making some ready excuse the previous evening.

He stood in the middle of the broad-tiled walk, and waited in angry impatience. At length he heard light footsteps coming along the gravel; he saw through the greenhouse door—which was red-stained glass—the figure of Miss Darvall at last!

The handle was turned, the door pushed back—and—could he believe his eyes! This was not Julia, but his wife, who was coming towards him with a letter in her hand!

CHAPTER XL

THERE WAS a moment's silence, and then she said,—

"Captain Elliot, Miss Darvall desired me to give you this," tendering the note as she spoke. She looked pale, but pallor suited her; she never looked more lovely.

There was a noticeable interval before he could control his voice, and then he asked, in a rather choked voice,—

"What are you doing here?"
"I am Miss Darvall's maid," she returned, stiffly.

"Miss Darvall's maid!" he repeated, as he looked at her fixedly.

She returned his glance with pitiless scorn. Her heart was garrisoned by her sorely wounded pride, her sorely wounded confidence, and within the citadel love long dead.

"Does Miss Darvall know who you are?" he asked, with an effort.

"Of course she knows; she took me from home. She knows that I am Mary Meadows."

"Is that all?" he asked, impressively.

"That is all there is to know, Captain Elliot," standing and confronting him with a pale, determined face.

He looked at her, and then stretched out his hand with a sudden impulsive gesture, and said,—

"Mary Elliot! Two years ago I behaved to you in a way that I am ashamed of. I was a brute. I've often thought of that day in Caversham."

"Don't!" she interrupted, sharply. "Don't remind me of what I wish to forget. Remember your own conditions, remember mine!"

She did not give him a chance of answering, for before he could realise it she was gone, the red glass door had been closed, and he was once more alone.

He made no attempt to follow her, but stood with his arms folded, and a kind of angry smile upon his face, partly in derision of himself for having so madly decided his fate and his future in the gust of a storm of passion.

He had figuratively consigned himself to celibacy, and yet he was the husband of one of the loveliest girls in England. He had seen all the London beauties of the day, and there was not one of them fit to hold a candle to Miss Darvall's maid.

She had an air of distinction and breeding that put her mistress very much in the shade, and if she had been a pretty girl two years ago she was fifty times prettier now. There was no trace of her birth in her accent or her carriage; in fact, if he had been told that his recent messenger was a princess in disguise, he was quite open to conviction.

As he paced slowly up and down the garden his mind was entirely occupied with one problem, and that problem was—how he could reasonably eat his own words, and ride through his own conditions!

His wife was as presentable as any wife in Europe; and if she were of low birth what matter! Her face, if it had first seen the light in a cottage, was worthy to adorn a palace, and it should certainly adorn his home before he was very much older.

He found time at length to open Miss Darvall's scrawl. The idea of his wife being his hostess's maid, and carrying a *billet doux* to him, struck him as a curious anomaly.

"Take a good look at her and tell me what you think of her by and by." He read this sentence aloud, then tore the note into fragments, and scattered them angrily about the gravel.

The same afternoon, as he sat beside her in a drag at the races, the question was put to him point-blank by his hostess, who asked him, airily,—

"What he thought of a certain person?"

"I admire her immensely," he answered, quietly; "so much, that I should like to see her a second time."

"Ah! I dare say, indeed; but I'm not going to allow you to turn her head."

"No fear of that!" he replied, somewhat scornfully.

"She knows you, I suppose; in fact, of course she does."

"How do you know?"

"Because I asked her."

"Oh! and what did she tell you?"

"Not much. She is not a talkative girl. She told me of one thing that amused me, though. She said she was sure you would not marry!"

"Marry!" he returned, bursting into harsh and bitter laughter. "I should not be surprised if I did not."

"And I should be surprised if you did not," returned Miss Darvall, putting a different infection on the words. "Here, we must not miss the race!" she added; "remember, I have a dozen pairs of gloves on Paradox with you! Let us give our minds to the great business of the day!"

Miss Darvall and her friends noted that the usually entertaining Captain Elliot was gloomy, preoccupied, and grave, and totally unlike himself. He was absent in mind, whatever he was in body, and at luncheon time, when baskets were opened, and corks were flying, he was seen trying to carve a fowl with a fruit-knife, and he put a large helping of Mayonnaise sauce over a plateful of raspberry-tart—two eccentricities that subjected him to no end of chaff from the men, and loud inquiries, such as,—

"Who is she?" Who was she, indeed! They little guessed.

That night Mr. and Miss Darvall gave a dance to their friends, not merely those under their own roof, but those staying in the neighbourhood.

The following night there was a servants' ball, into the arrangements for which Captain Burn—who, if the truth were told, was being made at his ease below stairs—threw all his energies *con amore*.

Of course, after dinner, when the fiddles struck up, all the dancing people upstairs eagerly descended, and sought the scene of action, a large, low panelled room, that had seen better days before the house was modernised. It was tastefully lighted and decorated, and the floor had been conscientiously waxed. Everything promised a capital dance.

Mr. Darvall did not dance; so Captain Burn opened the ball with the buxom housekeeper. Miss Darvall danced with the butler. Captain Elliot would fain have led out the lady's maid, but a gallant hussar had been too sharp for him. Whilst he was making up his mind and screwing up his courage, she was gone.

He did not seek another partner, but leant with his arms folded against the wall, and contented himself with looking on.

Miss Julia had had the greatest difficulty to prevail on her Abigail to be present. First she pleaded "too much to do," then that she "could not dance," then that she "had a headache."

At last Miss Darvall's suspicions were aroused, and she said,—

"You have some secret reason for staying away. Those are only silly excuses. It is some one that you don't want to meet. Have any of the gentlemen been annoying you? Come, now?"

"Oh, no, miss. Nothing of the kind."

"Then I shall expect to see you open the ball, Mary. You are the most important personage, next to the housekeeper, and you will certainly be the 'belle.' You only wanted a little pressing to go. Was not that it?"

Mary danced the Lancers *vis-à-vis* to Miss Blanche Stuart, and was the cynosure of every eye. When the set was over, her partner led her out down a cool stone passage in search of refreshments, which she declined. He detained her on one excuse or other till the fiddles and piano struck up a waltz, and then very reluctantly conducted her back to the ball-room. In the doorway they were confronted by various people, but specially by Captain Elliot, who said to Mary, in a rather eager tone,—

"Ah! May I have the pleasure of this?"

"Thank you, sir, I do not waltz," she returned with chilling composure.

"Then, perhaps, you will allow me to sit it out with you?" he persisted. This request was even more embarrassing still, but as there were a dozen listeners she could not abruptly decline, as she would certainly have done had they been alone. She would dissemble and walk away with him, and then make her escape.

Accordingly, she bowed her head, and took his arm without a word, and went away down the passage, but not into the refreshment room. He led her through a doorway straight out into the moonlit pleasure ground.

When they had gone about twenty yards, and were concealed from sight of the house by a thick

hedge of lauristinus, she removed her hand, and was about to turn back, but guessing her intention, he on his part laid his hand heavily on her arm, and detained her.

"Stay," he said. "I've been looking for this opportunity for the last two days. I have a great deal to say to you."

"Then I cannot imagine what it can be," she returned, endeavouring to free her arm; "but whatever it is you can write."

"No, I can't. I will speak with you here, face to face."

"Against my will?" she asked, sarcastically.

"Even against your will! Nothing I can say can be sufficiently adject for the way I treated you once."

"No, nothing," she returned, briefly.

"I was furious with my uncle, your father, you, and not with the real culprit—myself. I hope I am a better man than I was then."

"You might easily be that."

"Yes, and not be much, after all. I think it was that wound of mine that brought me round. When I was lying in that wretched little hospital, parched with thirst, and my very blood burnt dry with fever, with no one near me except one native dresser and a couple of sepoys, I used to say to myself,—

"Here I am, dying I believe, and not a soul belonging to me will be sorry. My uncle was gone—my father and mother I never remember. I have only some distant cousins, one of whom would be but naturally only too thankful to step into my shoes. As to lovers, I had had scores of a sort, affairs of a week or two, girls whose names I'd even forgotten, as doubtless they had mine. As I lay there, tossing from side to side, wishing at night that it was day, at day that it was night, the plain truth came home to me that I had not a soul belonging to me but you! And from you I could look for no mercy. My death would set you free; and once I was put away in my shallow grave in the sand I would be speedily forgotten—save in the regiment they would say,—'Oh! that was poor Elliot's horse, or that was a tiger skin poor Elliot shot, or he won that cup at such a race.'"

"They would declare that I was a good fellow I know; but beyond them my life would drop out of the world, just as a stone drops into the sea and is never missed. Then I began to say to myself that I'd been a selfish, careless, good-for-nothing lumberer of the ground, and if I got well I would amend my ways. I expect," looking at his companion keenly, "that you are thinking of the little couplet,—

'When the Devil fell ill,
The Devil a Saint would be;
When the Devil got well,
The Devil a Saint was he!'

"No, I was not," she answered calmly. "I was only wondering what was the good of all this talk. The past is done with, and all the words in the dictionary cannot cure it!"

"At least I will add a few more words," he replied, flushing hotly. "I came home quite well as you see me, and all my friends were very much more pleased than I expected; perhaps there are solid reasons for that, and I must not be too vain. I meant to go down to Carnfort and look you up; but I went with the tide of the London season, and I put off what is not a very pleasant duty to anyone—least of all to a man like me—put off going to you and telling you what a villain I know I have been, and humbly asking you to forgive me."

"I never thought of you at all," she interrupted, "till you met me the other day, bearing you a little missive from a young lady! Is not that the truth?"

"Have it so if you like! You can hit pretty hard. Where—tell me one thing—have you learnt to speak so purely and so correctly? I heard you refused my uncle's offer. Who has been educating you?"

"A very accomplished teacher," she returned calmly.

"A gentleman of my acquaintance?"

"A gentleman of your acquaintance!" he echoed, with a frown on his brow, and quite a different expression in his eyes. "I'm sure I am infinitely indebted to him."

"I really do not see why nor how it concerns you!"

"What is his name?" he asked, white with repressed feeling.

"His name is Horace."

"Mr. Horace, or Horace?"

"Horace is his Christian name, the other is a secret."

"And you call him by his Christian name?"

"Yes, and he calls me by mine!"

"There must be an end of this," he exclaimed, sternly.

She laughed merrily for the first time—a laugh that maddened her hearer—and then she said,—

"There is an end of it; for, of course, since I am Miss Darvall's maid, I've had no time for study or improving my mind."

"Improving your mind!" he echoed, angrily.

"As to Miss Darvall, there must be an end of that, too. You must give her notice—warning, whatever it is called; it is out of the question that you should continue in her service."

"And pray how am I to live? Who is to support my mother? All our money was lost in the Western Bank. She has nothing but what I earn!"

"All I have is yours."

"You are very good, but I would rather starve than even touch a penny of your fortune!"

"And so you mean to pass the rest of your life in the servants' hall—or brushing Miss Darvall's hair, and putting on her shoes!"

"No; Miss Darvall will marry, and go away from Daneford some day. I shall stay on then, if I can, and go back to my first post—house-maid. Miss Darvall had visions of marrying you. She likes you, and thought—"

"Did she impart these ideas to Mrs. Elliot?"

"She imparted these ideas to Mary Meadows, who, little as she cares for Captain Elliot, would not stand by and allow him to commit bigamy!"

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure," bowing quietly. "Then you will have nothing to say to me?"

"Nothing," she answered, and her eyes flashed fire.

"At least let me help you—I'll ask for nothing else—let me give you and your mother a comfortable home, and a decent income. I'll never trouble you in any way, and it will take a load off my conscience. Let me do this," he pleaded, passionately.

"Your conscience can bear a good deal. You made me marry you, and sacrifice my life, I may say, in order that you may keep that property. I was as one against four—mad with wounded pride—wounded shall I say, love. I did not much care what became of me. Still I saw what a fate I was drifting towards, to be chained for life to one who did not want me, and I appealed to you to let me go free! You know your answer. You turned a deaf ear to me then. Money—many thousands—stood in the way of my freedom. I was, as it were, sold in your interest. To take a shilling of such gains now would be taking blood-money—no more and no less!"

"And this is to be the end of it," he cried, hoarsely, his face working with uncontrollable emotion. "You stick to your station. You scorn my offer. Needless to add, and indeed I never expected more, you scorn me! Tell me, has that other fellow, has he ever offered you help? Did you talk of blood-money to him?"

"He once gave me ten pounds, for which I was most truly grateful," she answered, composedly.

"For which you were truly grateful," he echoed, after a moment of incredulous silence.

"Ten pounds! Good Heavens! Madam, are you aware that you have my name and honour in your keeping?" There was an ominous look in his eyes as he spoke.

"Stop!" she cried, putting out her hands as if to ward off a blow. "Name!—no! I trample on your name as I do upon this gravel! Your name I never mean to wear! Honour! I only guard my own! As for yours, it's a poor, miserable, little plant—take care of it! How can

you talk to me about your honour, when you remember that scene in the dining room at Carnegort, when you assured your uncle, and my adopted father, that you had only been amusing yourself with me!"

"Your adopted father! What do you mean by that?"

"Just what I say. Lowly born, as I was. I had a name when you saw me last. Since then I find I am nobody's child!—a waif and a stray—that John Meadows found and brought home!"

"This, then, accounts for your pride, your spirit, the scorn you heap upon me. I wondered at various things—I wonder no longer!" he exclaimed, turning away with a gesture of fierce impatience. "You inherit these things from someone, the same as you inherited your high-bred face, your hands and feet, and hard heart. It often puzzled me when I thought of you and your plain-featured parents; you reminded me of a young swan in a village duckpond. I see everything now; and I see that there is no hope for me!"

"Why?" she asked, curiously.

"Because you belong to a race like myself. You have not the soft, yielding, forgiving nature that springs in the bosom of a peasant's daughter. The pride of whole legions of ancestors gazes out of your eyes. Even as you look at me now, if you had been the child of John and Mary Meadows you would have pardoned me. Yes, I'm sure you would. As it is, I believe that 'nobody's' daughter, as you call yourself, will. Oh, Mary!"—suddenly seizing her hand—"since you have no name, take mine—take me. Do not spoil both our lives. I will make up to you for the past, I swear! I will devote my whole life to you! We will go away. We will be married over again, if you like! I will do anything you ask—anything you wish. Your mother (I mean Mrs. Meadows) shall live with us. Only, only say yes!"

He was in earnest—terribly in earnest. With a sort of reckless abandonment, he seemed to cast himself and his future into her hands.

He was waiting for an answer, amid a dead silence, only broken by the shivering of the adjacent leaves in the delicate evening breeze. By the brilliant moon the garden is as light as day.

He was waiting for her answer with breathless eagerness. He watched the changing expressions that flitted across her beautiful face.

Before she can say one word, good or bad, while yet she stands with her hands locked before her, looking back at him with the words which shall decide his fate and her own trembling on her lips, a loud, imperious voice calls out quite close to them (Miss Darvall's, who, with her partner, has strolled across the grass).—

"Mary! Mary! You don't mean to say that you and Captain Elliot are still in the garden! Captain Elliot you must not monopolise Meadows!" Miss Julia was piqued. She rarely spoke of her handmaiden and confidante in these terms; but then she had been watching her, as she stood with head down-bent, with her partner at her side, in the attitude of one who was talking earnestly. "Mary, Jenkins, the second footman, has been looking for you everywhere, to dance a polka! You must not refuse him. I've promised it for you!"

To this announcement Mary gave a slight shrug of her shoulders, and, turning round, walked obediently away, and went, not to the ball-room, straight up to her own room, from whence she did not reappear that evening.

"Now, Captain Elliot," said the heiress, "you can come and talk to me, for a change. Mr. Goring, go and dance!"—coolly dismissing her other companion with a gay little nod. "Now, do tell me, Captain Elliot, what you could possibly find to say to my maid for the space of a whole half-hour!"

This was a poser; but her cavalier was a well-trained fencer, and extricated himself from the difficulty with ease, though he devoutly wished his fair questioner at Jericho before she had disturbed an important conversation that he now laughed off and called "nothing."

CHAPTER XII.

BAFFLED by Captain Elliot, Miss Darvall resolved to sound Mary on the subject of the long, engrossing *tête-à-tête* which she had disturbed; and as Mary arranged her dress and fastened on her necklace and bracelets the next evening, she said, in a most casual way,—

"What dark secrets you and Captain Elliot were talking last evening!"

"Secrets!" echoed her companion, with well-feigned innocence.

"Yes; you looked so grave, so terribly in earnest, both of you, and so startled when I spoke; and I could see by Captain Elliot's face that he wished me miles away. Now, what could you possibly have to say to a gentleman? You are the very last girl I would expect to see flirting with anyone. You know yourself what a gay deceiver he has the name of being. I need not tell you what comes of an intimacy between a man of his station and a girl of your class!"

"No, miss," returned Mary, with burning cheeks, and her fingers trembled so much she could not fasten her mentor's necklace.

These signs were not lost upon Miss Darvall.

"Tell me, Mary, what he was saying to you; come now, he was talking to you for half-an-hour!"

"He was talking about—Carnegort—and—my mother, miss," she answered, evasively.

"Don't tell me stories. He was telling you something far more important. I would not be a bit surprised if he was asking you to run away with him."

Mary's brow darkened.

"You think so little of him, miss, that you believe he would run off with your maid from under your very roof."

She looked at her mistress with indignation, anger, and scorn.

"What is it if not love, then, that is between you?" inquired Miss Darvall, rather cowed by her attendant's vehemence.

"If you knew—no, it would be madness to tell you. This much I shall tell you—we hold between us a secret!"

"Which you will confide in me, Mary. You know I keep nothing from you," said the fair Julia, in a wheedling voice.

"I can never tell you, miss—it, as far as I can see, will never pass my lips—and there, now, there's the dinner gong!"

Exit Julia.

During the remaining three days of his visit Captain Elliot endeavoured by every means in his power to see Mary Meadows again. He hung about the gardens and pleasure-grounds; he was up at dawn—it was all of no use—not once did he catch even a glimpse of her dress.

He wrote her letters, which he sent to her by his man, and these letters had no result.

The infatuation for Miss Darvall's maid, on the part of a gentleman, was not hidden from the other servants, who are generally pretty sharp at discovering such affairs; and it was whispered to Miss Darvall herself that letters had passed; that Mary, with all her airs and her ways of keeping herself to herself, and living away from everyone but her mistress was "just no better than she ought to be."

This was imparted to her mistress by the housekeeper; also by Mrs. Martin, whose cold, piercing eyes were not blind, and who resented the way in which "a common girl from the Daneford lodge" had been brought in and bodily set between her employer's daughter and herself.

"I tell you they were in the greenhouse for half-an-hour together the other morning," said Mrs. Martin, "and a good hour in the grounds the night of the dinner, and he was begging and imploring of her to do something. It does not take long to make love to girls in her station, when a man is good-looking and rich; and there is no doubt that she is a very pretty girl—" "No doubt at all about that!" agreed Julia, sharply.

"I always said that she was above her station," continued Mrs. Martin; "she never would speak to one of the men-servants—she held herself so



"CAPTAIN ELLIOT—MISS DARVALL DESIRED ME TO GIVE YOU THIS!" SAID HIS WIFE.

high. Nothing will please her, seemingly, but a gentleman. A nice way she's getting herself spoken of below stairs!"

"Why—how!"

"Why his man told Forbes, the housemaid, about the letter (he is rather sweet on Forbes) and Forbes has told everyone; and besides this, Captain Elliot is always rambling about the grounds, plainly looking for her, and hoping to come across her. Be advised by me, my dear, and send that girl away before there is a scandal; and mark my words, there will be one. Send her away before she runs away!" concluded Mrs. Martin, with emphasis.

The result of this conference with Mrs. Martin was a very serious conversation between Mary and her employer.

Mary protested most vehemently—most passionately—that, though she had received letters from Captain Elliot, though she believed that he dogged her steps and lay in wait for her about the grounds, yet that on her honour and word she was the very last girl in the world to return his advances; and as to running away with him, she would, if Miss Darvall liked, swear to her on the Bible that such an idea had never entered her head; and "that she would sooner die than do such a thing!"

She was so much in earnest that Julia could not but believe her, and knowing the jealousy that raged against her in Mrs. Martin's bosom—not to speak of the housekeeper's room—she was convinced that mountains had been made out of molehills, that though Captain Elliot was *debris* from her maid, her maid was not to be tempted—that she probably knew more to his discredit than other people, as she came from his own neighbourhood, and was well on her guard. Besides, Mary was as cool and as unresponsive as an old woman of eighty; and although she was furious with Captain Elliot for daring to make love to Mary—Mary herself was quite reinstated in her good graces; and by the time they had returned to Upper Cream-street she was as

much Miss Darvall's trusted confidante and prime minister as ever!

Judge, then, of her horror and amazement, about a fortnight after her return to town, on returning late one night from a ball, at being triumphantly informed that Mary Meadows was missing since supper time, and that she had been seen at Charing Cross Station, and that there was not the slightest doubt but that she had gone off to the Continent with Captain Elliot!

"There's a note for you," said Mrs. Martin, who was quite animated. "Do open it, and let us hear what the bold hussy has to say for herself."

Naturally Miss Darvall lost no time in tearing it open, and making herself the mistress of its contents, which ran as follows:—

"DEAR MADAM,—I have just heard that my mother is very ill, and I am going down by the express, and hope you will excuse my leaving so suddenly; but in a case of illness I dare not delay, as she is an old woman, and has no one to look after her but myself.—Your obedient servant,
"MARY MEADOWS."

"A likely tale!" cried Mrs. Martin. "Her mother, indeed! Oh, there is nothing like still waters for running deep."

"Well, never mind, we know nothing for certain," standing up for Mary to the last, "tomorrow we shall know everything. She may have gone to her mother; why not give her the benefit of the doubt?"

"I've telegraphed, and she is not at Dane-ford," said Mrs. Martin.

The next morning about nine o'clock, to everyone's amazement, Mary Meadows drove up in a hansom and walked in, to quote Mrs. Martin, "as if the whole place belonged to her!" She looked very pale, and asked to be shown up to Miss Darvall's room—which request was tardily complied with—and she and Miss Darvall were closeted together for nearly two hours. No one could catch a word, but they seemed to be talk-

ing almost the whole time. And at the end of it Mary went out, looking paler than ever, and went away—down stairs and out of the house, in fact, and was never in Cream-street seen again! Her boxes were despatched to the lodge at Dane-ford, and Miss Darvall flatly refused to answer any questions—no matter how cleverly put—but all she would say was, "that in the matter of staying out all night, Mary was perfectly blameless, and that Mary had left her service of her own accord."

Here was a mystery—here was a riddle—a mystery and a riddle, that not a soul could solve—from Mrs. Martin herself down to Betsy, the scullerymaid.

(To be continued.)

RUSSIA, having determined to promote colonization and civilisation in Siberia, has ceased to send criminals there. A recent edict debarred Hebrews from settling in this Asiatic dependency, not on religious grounds, but because their money-making proclivities lead to sharp practices at the expense of the peasantry.

For the past twenty or more years the ingenuity of inventors has been exercised in the construction of gas-saving appliances. Most of these have turned out to be dismal failures, and the few that have seemed successful are objectionable in many respects. The one obstacle in the way of the successful regulation of gas is the deposit of an adhesive gummy substance that collects on the inside of the pipes. Any device sufficiently delicate to control the current with any plecty speedily becomes clogged by this gum and is rendered worthless. Efforts have been made to introduce some substance that would cut this gum away, but this involved a feeder which is very difficult to apply without danger of leakage. Therefore, up to date, the gas regulator for the use of households is not a marked success.



HAROLD DINEVOR WAS IDONIE'S ESCORT WHEN SHE WENT ON DECK.

ORDEAL BY FIRE.

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CHAPTER VII.

It was wonderful how much Nan Lindsay enjoyed the voyage, she proved an excellent sailor, and after the first day or two, when the strangeness of everything had passed off, the time was one long pleasure. She quite forgot that she was doubtful of her brother-in-law's welcome, and that at the best she would only be a poor relation in his house. She only remembered that she should soon see Idonie, the sister who had once been almost her second self, and that for months to come the aching, torturing problem of how to earn her own living need not trouble her. Helen Lester had summed up the position clearly, and her words were a great comfort to Nan after they had parted. "You give up nothing by going to India. Even if you come back at the end of a few months, and have to start the weary search for employment afresh, the holiday will have done you a world of good, and Mr. Andrews's malice can do you no further harm, since you need not allude to your duties at the Art Shop, but can tell any future employer that you have just returned from India."

With this to cheer her, when she felt "down," Nan put aside all thought of the future and enjoyed herself thoroughly. She was quite the favourite among the lady passengers. Mr. and Mrs. Allardye were her kindest friends, they contrived that she should have a share in whatever pleasure and gaiety was going forward, and it certainly did not decrease the girl's popularity for it to be known that the distinguished author and his wife regarded her as their special charge.

There was a family on board returning to Dolerabad, and the lady told Nan that she knew her sister well. This Mrs. Wilmot did not seem to regard Sir Denzil as a domestic tyrant, and said frankly she expected Miss Lindsay would like him very much.

"Of course he is years and years older than Lady Trefusis, but he is devoted to her. I think, if the children had lived, they would have been one of the happiest couples I know."

It did not enter Nan's head to ask if they were not happy now. Mrs. Wilmot enquired if she expected to be met at Calcutta, and offered, if no one appeared from her sister, to take care of her to Dolerabad.

"It is not a very long journey, but it is a tedious one, and it would not be nice for you to be alone."

"Thank you very much. If Idonie does not send to meet me I shall be very grateful for your escort."

But she hoped with all her heart that her sister would send. Almost painfully Nan hoped it, for she felt that the Wilmots would regard it as a strange breach of hospitality if Lady Trefusis suffered her guest to arrive and find no one awaiting her.

They arrived quite early in the morning, so early, indeed, that some of the passengers had left the ship before Nan appeared on deck. She had meant to get up much earlier, but the excitement had kept her awake until long after midnight, and so she overslept herself. She was not very sorry, for she felt that it saved her some time of suspense. She would far rather not have to talk to any of her fellow-passengers until she knew whether her sister had sent to meet her. Everyone would ask her the same question, and to have no reply ready would be most trying.

She was standing at the side of the vessel, looking out at the sea, which was so unlike everything she had ever seen before. Her eyes were full of a deep interest at the novel spectacle, and she was thinking how Helen Lester would have enjoyed it with her, when the Captain's voice sounded at her elbow: "Sir Denzil Trefusis has come to meet you, Miss Lindsay."

She turned, and saw her brother-in-law standing at her elbow. Her first impression was that he was much older than she had expected. Her

next that it was a good, true face, and she should like him very much.

"I am very pleased to see you, Miss Lindsay," said Sir Denzil, gravely. "If you are ready I think we will leave the ship at once. I have ordered breakfast at my hotel, and we can make acquaintance better there than in this crowd."

She said her "good-bye" quietly enough, and in a very few minutes she and her brother-in-law had quitted the *Calliope*.

He spoke very little, hardly at all, until they were at the hotel, which was so unlike all Nan's preconceived ideas of India as to amaze her. The repast was laid in a private room, and coloured servants, with noiseless tread, attended on them. As soon as they were alone, Sir Denzil said, abruptly, "You are not like my wife."

"No; I am two years older, and Idonie was always our beauty. When shall I see her, Sir Denzil? I am logging for the meeting."

"It is about two days' journey. We cannot start till the cool of the evening; but I am not sorry for the delay. There is a great deal that I want to say to you, Miss Lindsay."

Nan wished he would call her by her Christian name, but did not feel familiar enough with him to say so. He led the way on to the verandah. It was carefully darkened to keep out the sun, and Nan felt a luxurious sensation of ease as she sank back into a low chair.

"When did you last hear from Idonie, Miss Lindsay?"

"I had her letter in December. She begged me to come out to her in the *Calliope*, and sent my steamer ticket." Here the girl blushed hotly. "I hope, Sir Denzil, you do not mind."

"Mind! You must take me for a veritable curmudgeon. I am very glad that Idonie should have one of her own people with her. I only wish you had come months sooner."

Nan thought privately she could not well have come unasked. Aloud, she said, anxiously,—

"Sir Denzil, I can't help feeling from your manner there is something the matter. I wish you would tell me what it is. I am only twenty-

four, but I have known a great deal of trouble, and I would always rather look a sorrow in the face than have it attack me unawares."

"You are a brave girl," he said, simply, "and I will trust you. As Idonie's sister you may judge me hardly; but I must tell you the whole story to make you understand."

He told her the story of his cousin's visit, of Idonie's "unfortunate" objection to Miss Grant, of her flight from home, and her subsequent illness. He kept back nothing.

"Miss Lindsay, as there is a heaven above us, I meant no slight to my wife. Alice Grant was my own cousin—the family are poor and proud. When my aunt wrote and asked me to have her daughter for a few months I could not send back a banknote and say I would not have the girl, but I would pay for her having change of air. Idonie was a great deal alone, and I thought, I really did, that the girls would be pleasant companions."

"I expect," said Nan, simply, "the mischief arose from Mrs. Grant writing to you. That made her daughter your guest, not Idonie's, and placed them in a wrong position from the first. I dare say Idonie was a little unreasonable; but if ever I had a house of my own I think I should like to have the inviting of my own guests—the ladies, I mean."

"Well, Alice Grant has gone home," said Sir Denzil, with a sigh, "my aunt wrote and reproached me with not having guarded her child's good name. I'll confess that letter made me wild. I had sacrificed my home comfort, estranged my wife, and made myself the most unpopular man in Dolerabad, all for the sake of Mrs. Grant's daughter, and then she accused me of tarnishing her good name."

"But if Miss Grant has gone home things will come right, won't they?" asked Nan. "You say that Idonie is out of all danger, and has only to get up her strength."

He sighed. Sir Denzil's domestic affairs seemed to be in great disorder.

"Idonie is so far better that the doctor declares she has only to get up her strength; but she is low-spirited, and seems possessed with the idea that I want her to die, so that I may marry Alice Grant."

"I have often heard of invalids taking up some foolish fancy after a long illness. I suppose," and Nan's clear eyes met Sir Denzil's unflinchingly, "this is a fancy!"

"Why, of course it is. I wouldn't marry Alice Grant if I had never even met Idonie. My wife is dearer to me than the whole world, Miss Lindsay, only I am not a demonstrative man, and I am not clever at telling her so."

He paused and then went on.

"The doctor assures me Idonie requires a thorough change. That a sea voyage and her native air will do more to restore her to her old self than anything. It is quite impossible for me to leave India at present. Besides, in her present state, my companionship is not desirable. Next October my term of service expires, and I retire on a pension. Meanwhile, I have written to my mother saying I am sending my wife home, and that I hope she will either see that Trefusis Hall is prepared for her reception or receive her as her own guest. When I told Idonie what I had done she pointed black refused to go to Trefusis. She said that she had sent for you, and must stay here till she had shown you India."

"She must do nothing of the sort," said Nan, quickly. "I can go home. I may be of use to her on the voyage, and take care of her until your mother meets her."

The uselessness of this speech was not lost upon Sir Denzil.

"My dear young lady," he said, gently, "you don't suppose when you have come out here to visit us, I should let you go home with your visit unpaid. What I wish is this, that you should accompany Idonie to Trefusis, she will be far more likely to content herself there if she has you with her. If at the end of a month she absolutely declines to stay in the country, I suggest that my brother should take a furnished house for her at Southsea, where she lived before our marriage, and that you live with her there,

Miss Lindsay," as Nan tried to speak, "it may seem that I am asking a great deal of you, but I am most anxious about my wife. I cannot keep her here with me against the doctor's orders, and she is so young and thoughtless, I dare not trust her to make a home for herself alone. She is in that state of weakness when opposition comes more naturally to her than anything. My mother, Lady Mary Trefusis, is the kindest woman I ever knew, but Idonie's only experience of my relatives has been so unfortunate, she may make up her mind to dislike my mother. When I heard you were coming I felt thankful. I foresaw that if you were willing you could relieve all my fears. With your companionship on the voyage, Idonie will be well cared for, and the very fact of having you with her may make her contented at Trefusis."

"You have forgotten one thing," said Nan, nervously, "will your mother like a stranger foisted on her?"

"My mother is the most hospitable of women, but, in reality, you would be my guest, not hers. There is another thing I forgot, Miss Lindsay. I cannot let you be at any expense while you are with us. I want you to be with my wife as her sister, and as my honoured guest, but you must allow me to offer you the same remuneration as I should give to any lady engaged as Idonie's companion. It is not fair that you should sacrifice a good engagement for us otherwise."

"You are very kind," Nan felt she could be quite frank with him; "but I was out of a situation when Idonie's letter came."

"Well, will you consider that you have found one now? Miss Lindsay, I am a rich man. My wife is all I have in the world. I would spend every shilling of my fortune to make her happy, but so far I have failed."

"Have patience with her," pleaded Nan, "she is so young, and we spoil her so in the old days at home. She was my father's idol."

In the cool of the evening they started on their journey. To Nan it seemed of endless length, and she was thankful when at last they reached Colonel Vivian's house. Idonie had positively refused to return to her own home. She said she had suffered too much there to care ever to see it again, so Mary Wells had been despatched to Dolerabad to pack her lady's possessions and her own, but she was not to return to England with Lady Trefusis. She preferred Indian life, and was promised a post in Lady Carlyon's household.

"Nan."

"Donie."

That was all. The sisters were in each other's arms. An expression of radiant gladness flitted across Idonie's lovely features; but Nan, as she noticed her darling's thin pale face, wondered if she had found her only to lose her again. Kind Miss Vivian left them together for three whole hours, then she came in to tell them that Sir Denzil was asking to see Idonie.

"I don't want him!" said Idonie, pettishly, "he'll only worry me by praising his mother. I am quite sure, Nan, she's a horrid old woman who will shut us up and feed us on bread and water."

But Nan beat a retreat, and sent Sir Denzil into his wife's room. He sat down by the couch.

"Better, my darling!" he asked, as he kissed her.

"I shall never be better, Denzil," she said, "and you know it perfectly. I believe you are sending me to England that I may die on the voyage, and so you will save the expenses of my funeral."

"Idonie! you must not talk like that, dear; it is not right."

Idonie sighed.

"What do you think of Nan?"

"Chiefly that she is not like you."

"She is a hundred times better. Don't you wish you had married her instead of me?"

"No, I don't. I am quite satisfied with my wife; only I wish she would not be quite so fanciful."

"I can't help it, Denzil. I am ill."

That was always the end of it. These two

never came any nearer to a perfect understanding.

Idonie would not be convinced of her husband's love, and when he tried to reason with her she always made the delicacy of her health her excuse.

Sir Denzil found to his great regret that he could not take his wife to Calcutta and put her on board. He had neglected his official duties terribly during her illness, and an important trial was fixed for the very day on which the *Atalanta* sailed. Colonel Vivian offered to be his substitute, and there was no doubt the kind old officer would take every possible care of the invalid; but all the same, Sir Denzil would have preferred to go himself.

No substitute for Mary Wells had been engaged; none of the maids who offered themselves had pleased Idonie, and Nan said at last she did not think they needed any one. She was an excellent sailor, and could look after her sister.

She had another long conversation with her brother-in-law before they started for Calcutta. He told her all the business details, to which Idonie would not listen.

He was sending home instructions for an account to be opened in his wife's name at the bank nearest Trefusis, and two thousand pounds would be placed to her credit there; as he expected to rejoin her in eight or nine months he judged this would be sufficient; but if not, his agents had instructions to advance a further sum.

If Idonie and her sister remained at River View, he himself would make the needful pecuniary arrangements with his mother. If they had a separate establishment at Trefusis Hall, or took a furnished house at Southsea, Idonie could draw the money needed for current expenses from the bank. Finally, he suggested two hundred a-year as Nan's "salary," and insisted on paying her the first half-year in Bank of England notes. His manner was kind, almost affectionate, but through it all there ran a strain of disappointment; and poor Nan was painfully conscious that, dearly as he loved Idonie, he regarded his marriage as a failure.

It dawned on Nan that if she could bring these two together, and help them to understand each other, she would be doing a noble work.

For herself she was just a little sorry to leave India so soon; she would have liked to see more of its wonders, but she was glad to be of use and to feel that so far from her arrival having been unwelcome to Sir Denzil he had relied on her help.

As for Idonie Nan could not understand her. Sometimes she seemed a heartless butterfly, at others a loving, sorrowing woman; and, unfortunately, it was always the former side of her nature she showed to her husband.

Nan longed to beg her to be kind to him at the last. To give him a few tender words to remember her by in her absence, but she had wisdom enough to feel that any such attempt would only drive Idonie into more wilfulness.

It came at last. The Colonel's carriage was at the door. Miss Vivian hospitably fluttered about everywhere. Nan almost pushed her sister into a little room where she had first decoyed Sir Denzil. Nan was resolved that at least no one should witness their farewell. She would have been disappointed had she seen it. Denzil took his wife's hand and tried to draw her closer to himself.

"You will write to me, Idonie!"

"If I don't forget. But there won't be any need. Your mother is sure to send you weekly reports of her prisoner!"

"Idonie, don't speak like that. My wife, now we are parting, can't you be a little kinder?"

"Nothing I can say pleases you," said Idonie, petulantly. "I wish to goodness you had never married me. I would much rather be free like Nan, than tied to a man who thinks me a burden."

There was a dead silence. Oh! how bitterly she regretted her cruel speech. How she wished he would reproach her, or do anything that could make her fancy he was in the wrong. She could

hear the beating of his heart. Oh! why did not he speak?

But Miss Vivian came in to say the carriage was waiting, Idonie must come. Sir Denzil still holding his wife's hand, placed her at her sister's side.

"Heaven bless you, my wife, now and always—take care of her, Nan."

He wrung Nan's hand. He did not kiss Idonie, the others did not notice the omission, concluding such little matters had been attended to in the private farewell indoors. Sir Denzil stood bareheaded, looking after the carriage till it was out of sight. Idonie buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"I shall never see him again, Nan; never while I live!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Nothing could have been kinder than Colonel Vivian's care of his two nieces on the journey to Calcutta. An old and experienced traveller, he made things as comfortable for the sisters as possible, and by degrees Idonie's spirits rose till she seemed the gayest of the party.

She was of such a mercurial temperament that it was not fair to judge her quite as other people. She felt things deeply, intensely, but her mood was changeable, and often she seemed only a butterfly.

Nan felt half indignant with her sister, and yet she knew that at heart Idonie was sorrowing still for the parting from her husband in spite of her seeming gaiety.

Lady Trefusis had objected to passing a night at Calcutta, and so the journey had been so arranged that they should only reach the port when it was time to embark. Idonie seemed to have almost a morbid dread of meeting anyone she knew, and she had openly rejoiced when Sir Denzil, after reading the list of passengers, declared there was no one from Dolerabad.

Colonel Vivian found that they had arrived so late that he had only just time to take his nieces on board. Fortunately their luggage had been despatched previously, so there was no delay, and the two sisters stepped on the gangway of the *Atalanta* just ten minutes before all strangers would be called on to leave the ship.

"Perhaps it is as well," the kind old soldier thought to himself. "Long drawn out farewells are always a mistake, and when I have once introduced the girls to the captain I can do nothing more for them."

It chanced that Colonel Vivian had made the voyage once before in the *Atalanta*, and had kept up his acquaintance with Captain Penfold; this fact had influenced Sir Denzil in choosing this vessel for his wife's passage.

"I've brought my nieces, Penfold," said the Colonel. "Lady Trefusis and Miss Lindsay, they are travelling alone and I am sure you'll keep an eye on them. Sir Denzil is unable to accompany his wife, but I told him if he sent her home in the *Atalanta* you'd look after her."

Captain Penfold made some conventional remark. He was courteous itself; but the captain of an ocean liner has not much time to bestow on passengers the last few minutes before his ship sails, and almost directly he was called away.

"I must be going," said the Colonel. "Idonie my dear, take care of yourself. Trefusis will expect to find you quite well and strong when he reaches England. Nan, remember, I have always a home for you when you are tired of independence."

He kissed them both, another minute and they saw him disappear among the crowd of people leaving the ship. Both girls stood at the side of the vessel straining their eyes after his familiar form. Then quite suddenly Nan felt the movement of the screw, and a moment later she saw a tiny sheet of blue water between the ship and the land, she knew it meant that their voyage had begun.

It was a very little while since she had parted from Helen Lester, her closest friend. In leaving England she had left behind her friends native land, and the associations of her whole life; in leaving India she was parted from none very

dear to her, and as she had only been seven days in the country, and spent nearly four of them in travelling, she did not know enough of the place to regret it, but to her own surprise she was far more depressed now than on New Year's Day she sailed in the *Calliope*.

Try as she would she could not form a single pleasurable anticipation. She knew that in Sir Denzil she had found a generous brother-in-law; that even if he did not wish her to live with him and his wife permanently, he would, on his return, certainly make some provision for her future, and yet a horrible depression had seized on her, and hope seemed to have left her.

It was Idonie who broke the silence, and her voice sounded pettish.

"Really, Nan, I don't see why you should look so miserable, you are not leaving your home and husband and going back to die, like I am."

Nan roused herself.

"I don't believe you are going home to die, Donie; but I quite admit you have more to regret than I have. Let us go downstairs and look at our quarters, we might do some unpacking before the ship rolls too much."

Sir Denzil had made the most liberal arrangements for his wife's comfort. The airy cabin into which the sisters were shown had been designed to carry four persons, but the two upper berths had been removed, thus giving more space, and that Idonie should have room for her possessions, he had also engaged a smaller cabin adjoining, from which all the berths had been taken, leaving only the sofa. Here such trunks as the sisters were likely to require on the voyage had been placed, so that their own cabin might have more space. The stewards explained all these details graphically. Evidently she thought that the ladies, for whom so much expense had been incurred, would be liberal in the matter of tips, and she much embarrassed Nan by addressing her as "my lady," evidently considering that the elder sister must, of course, be the married one.

"What a talkative woman," said Nan, when she had at last retired; "but she seems kind and capable, Donie."

"And she called you 'my lady.' She actually took me for an unmarried girl. What fun."

"I tried hard to set her right, but she talked so much. I could not get in a word edgewise."

"I'm glad of it," said Idonie, cheerfully. "Nan, if you are not a horrid old marplot I see my way to having a delightful time and forgetting all my worries."

Nan did not understand in the least, and said so.

"Why, I will be Miss Lindsay and you shall be Lady Trefusis. Then, if there are any amusing young men on board, and I venture to talk to them, I can't be condemned as a 'flirting matron.' You will uphold Denzil's dignity far better than I can, and can take care of your giddy little sister."

"I wouldn't have agreed to the deception, in any case; but fortunately it is an impossible one, for Uncle introduced us to the captain."

"Who didn't listen to a word he said. Nan—" and she laid her cheek against her sister's, in the coaxing way which had won Nan over so often in the old days at home. "Don't be a horrid old marplot and spoil all your poor little sister's fun. I promise you faithfully I'll do nothing even Denzil could object to. I'll be as good as gold, only let me put aside my dignity for once and be a girl again."

"It would not be right," said Nan, deprecatingly; but her tone was not so firm as before, and Idonie knew the battle was half won. "It couldn't hurt anyone," she persisted, "and Nan, dear, think what an awful time I shall have of it at Trefusis. Lady Mary will make me feel just like a State prisoner, her daughters will snub me to their hearts' content, they will all treat me like a naughty child Denzil has sent home in disgrace. Nan, you might let me have a little fun first."

"But they would be sure to find it out," said Nan. "Sir Denzil said Mr. Trefusis would come to meet us."

"My dear girl, I have no intention of being there to be met. I intend to leave the ship at

Brindisi and go on overland. No one will ever know that we have changed identities. Nan, do say yes."

And Nan yielded against her better judgment. She hated the whole scheme, but she was afraid to oppose her sister. Idonie had but just recovered from a dangerous illness. Doctor, nurse, and husband had all of them impressed on Nan that at any cost the convalescent must be kept cheerful, there was a morbid tendency in her nature which must be combated. Now, Nan knew perfectly that if she refused to lend herself to Idonie's scheme, that young lady would take refuge in low spirits. She would talk of nothing but her own decease and post-mortem arrangements. She would refuse her food, and mope in her cabin instead of joining any diversions going on on board. Sir Denzil hoped so much from the voyage, and if it was to benefit his wife at all she must not be crossed just at the beginning.

"I suppose you must have your way, Donie," said Miss Lindsay, rather grudgingly, "only, if your plot ever reaches Sir Denzil's ears I must entreat you to clear me. He trusted me, and I should not like him to think I betrayed that trust."

Idonie kissed her. No one could be more amiable than her little ladyship when she got her own way.

"Denzil has the highest opinion of your wisdom. I believe he thinks you a sort of female Solomon; but, Nan dear, he knows the strength of my will, and will quite acknowledge you could not withstand it. Now, it is quite settled you are Lady Trefusis, and I am Miss Lindsay, only I think I will keep the Donie."

"By all means," said Nan, "and remember, please, that I am a wretched actress, and shall want constant coaching in my part."

"You'll have nothing to do except answer when people call you 'Lady Trefusis,' and look after me. Oh, there's one thing we mustn't forget—you'll want a wedding ring."

"Oh! I couldn't," said Nan, firmly, as Idonie slipped a hoop of gold off her own third finger, "that is Denzil's ring, no one but his wife must wear it."

"Well, I'll look it away," said Idonie, too clever to insist upon trifles, "and this other is sufficiently like a wedding ring to pass muster, and as I bought it myself in a bazaar, you can have no scruples."

It was a very broad band of gold, with no stones; but the monogram "L.T." engraved in old English letters, turned so that this came underneath the finger, and was, therefore, hidden; it was a first rate imitation of the ring supposed to be the outward sign of holy matrimony.

Nan took it up reluctantly.

"It fits beautifully," said Idonie. "What pretty hands you have, dear, and why do you never wear rings?"

"I did not think them suitable to my calling in London, and since I left England I have never thought about it."

"By the way, Nan, I have not heard yet what situation you had in London."

"I had rather not talk about it, Donie. Helen Lester approved of it, so you will understand it was quite respectable."

"You dear old thing," said Idonie, "you couldn't be anything but respectable if you tried. Why did you leave Nan?"

"I would rather not tell you."

"But I would rather know. Pray, did the brother of your pupils discover that you were extremely nice looking?"

"If you must know, Donie, my employer's son wanted to marry me."

"Good gracious; and were his parents angry?"

"Dreadfully angry with me."

"But it wasn't your fault."

"It was, in a manner. I refused him. I think they took my answer as an insult."

"I suppose he was rich?"

"Tolerably so. When his father died he would be very wealthy."

"Wasn't it a pity Nan. Money can do so much."

"It hasn't made you very happy," said Nan, bluntly; "and as for me, I'd rather work my fingers to the bone than marry a man for the sake of a home."

She stopped abruptly, half fearing Idonie might be offended; but her sister was lost in a reverie.

"I shall wear my sky-blue cashmere to-night. What shall you put on, Nan?"

"I have no idea," said Nan. "I have a dreadful headache, Donie. The screw of the steamer seems to go through and through it. If it were not that you are an invalid, and I am your attendant, I believe I would forswear dinner and go to bed."

"You had much better," said Donie, tenderly, "the Captain will look after me, and I'll promise faithfully to come back to you at ten, however fascinating people make themselves."

Nan had no intention of yielding, but when she tried to dress, her head seemed to turn round and round. She did not feel in the least sea-sick; but the throbbing pain in her temples made the least movement almost intolerable. Privately Nan believed Idonie rather rejoiced at her misfortunes; but she reproached herself for the thought when Donie insisted on helping her to bed, bringing her own eau-de-cologne and bathing the aching forehead as tenderly as any nurse.

"Now I shall tell the stewardess to bring you some dinner, Nan, and you must try to eat it. There's the bell for dinner, so I must leave you. I'll promise to be discretion itself, and please remember, dear, that you are Lady Trefusis, and you have to bear the full burden of that dignity."

Seats were reserved for the two sisters at Captain Penfold's table. He greeted Idonie very cordially.

"Has your sister succumbed, Miss Lindsay?" Idonie was delighted at seeing he had already made the mistake she intended to lead him into. Her eyes positively danced as she said,—

"She is lying down with a bad headache. Lady Trefusis is only just recovering from a long illness, and she has to be very careful."

The conversation became general. It was what Idonie called "a very pleasant set," who had their places at the Captain's table, three married couples, a gentle, motherly, elderly lady, two unattached men, and Captain Penfold himself. She would not have felt quite so contented had she known that one of the gentlemen had intimate friends at Dolerabad, and was perfectly on fait with her own story. He had never met her personally, though he had come across Sir Denzil several times, and was an acquaintance of the Grants. As he was one of the men the fair Alice had in vain tried to captivate before she came to her cousin's house, all his sympathies were on the side of Lady Trefusis, and he blamed Sir Denzil a good deal more than he deserved.

"I hope your sister's health will soon improve," he told Idonie. "Although I have never had the pleasure of meeting her, I have heard so much of her from my friends the Carlyons, that I cannot think of her as a stranger."

"I am sure she will be very pleased to see you," said Idonie, mendaciously. "Of course she has been very ill, but she is on the mend now, and I am taking her home to England to finish the cure."

Captain Penfold smiled.

"Are you sure she is not taking you, Miss Lindsay?" he asked, mischievously. "I never saw anyone look more fit to take care of herself than Lady Trefusis."

Harold Dynevor was Idonie's escort when she went on deck. He was a grave, intelligent man of about thirty; not rich but with fair means. He had served seven years in an Indian bank, and was now going home to take up a higher position in the London branch. His official income was a thousand a year, and he had besides something of his own. The cadet of an old county family, he had brought out the best of introductions, and had been warmly welcomed in Anglo-Indian society on account of his pleasant manners and good connections.

"At the worst," as Mrs. Grant put it to her daughter, when she was trying to secure Harold as a son-in-law, "Mr. Dynevor has an excellent

position and a good income, while one or two unexpected deaths would make him an English nobleman."

Alice had quite agreed as to Harold's eligibility, and had done her utmost to secure him, but he had seen the net and escaped it.

Harold Dynevor was regarded by his intimates as a confirmed bachelor; the truth being that he had never yet seen a woman with whom he could fall in love, while he was old-fashioned enough to think that mutual love was an absolute necessity for wedded happiness.

He had been devoted to his mother, who died just before he left England, and his memory of her had tended to give him an almost chivalrous respect for all women. He had heard Lady Trefusis's story from the Carlyons and had pitied her sincerely. He was rather pleased to find that he was to be her fellow-passenger, and was quite prepared to do all in his power to make her voyage agreeable.

He was just a little disappointed in the supposed Miss Lindsay. He knew she had been summoned to her sister's help (so the rumour went), when Lady Trefusis found her home intolerable, and he had expected to see a more earnest-minded, reliable woman. This girl seemed a mere child—a creature of smiles and tears. He could not imagine any woman with a heart-trouble leaning on her for support.

But it was hard to judge the pretty little butterfly harshly, and so Harold Dynevor devoted himself to "Miss Lindsay" with such success that when Idonie went below she told her sister there was at least one agreeable man on board.

Nan looked up anxiously.

"Surely you won't—"

"My dear, I won't flirt with him, if that's what you mean. Indeed, I can't fancy anyone flirting with Harold Dynevor, he's much too grave and dignified. He knows some friends of mine—I mean of yours—at Dolerabad, and seems disposed to feel a great deal of interest in Lady Trefusis. Don't snub him, Nan, there's a dear."

"I feel much too ill to snub anyone," said Nan, languidly. "My head aches ready to split. Donie, do make haste and get into bed; the light will be put out soon!"

"It's electric, and I can switch it on again. I'm going into the next cabin—our dressing-room, you know, to get out a white frock for to-morrow. Dressed in white, with my hair done in one long pig-tail, I flatter myself that I could pass for seventeen!"

She was gone some time, when she returned she was quite voluble.

"That little room will be a great comfort. I tried the sofa and it's not half bad. It hasn't got a white wrapper on like this; its crimson velvet is left in all its unveiled splendour."

Racked with pain, and too weary to think clearly, the remark awoke no echo of the pest in Nan's brain. Had she been in her usual health and spirits it would have struck her that two of the clairvoyant's predictions had been fulfilled. She had stayed but a week in India, and a small cabin next her own was furnished with a crimson-velvet couch.

Towards midnight Nan fell into a restless, uneasy sleep. As for Idonie she slumbered as peacefully as a child, little recking how tragically the voyage was to end.

(To be continued.)

A SUBSTITUTE for honey has been introduced in Germany under the name of sugar-honey, and consists of sugar, water, minute amounts of mineral substances, and free acid.

In some parts of China the young women wear their hair in a long single plait, with which is intertwined a bright scarlet thread. This style of ornamentation denotes that the young lady is marriageable.

CHRONIC INDIGESTION and its attendant Misery and Suffering Cured with Tonic "Dorcon" (purely vegetable), 2/6. From Chemists, 8/-, post free from Dr. Hous, "Glandower," Bournemouth. Sample bottle and pamphlet, with Analytical Reports, &c., 6 Stamps.

LADY MAY'S COUSIN.

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(Continued from page 416.)

"If papa says 'no,' I can never marry you until he consents. I couldn't leave him in anger now he is old and feeble. Denis, it might be years before we could be anything to each other. Are you sure you will care to wait?"

"You are the star of my life now!" he murmured; "and I would rather wait until I was old and grey than fail to win you in the end for the queen of my home! We are both young, May; if your father persists in his refusal we must wait bravely until he relents. I can bear anything, dearest, so only that you are true to me!"

"I shall be that while life lasts!"

They parted there; another ten minutes and May stood on the threshold of her own home, a light in her eyes, a strange new joy written on every feature, a perfect picture of girlish happiness and loving trust.

Susan met her in the hall, and it really looked as though her old eyes had shed many a tear in the lady's absence.

"There's a gentleman come, my dear," she began, simply; "and your papa wishes you to dress at once and go down to the drawing-room."

May shivered. Save in the case of Mr. Thomas, Lord Dunmore had never shown himself very hospitable. In spite of her efforts May's thoughts would go to that story of Captain Pearson, and a strange presentiment would connect this unexpected guest with the man Denis said was her father's favoured future son-in-law.

"What is his name, nurse?"

They were upstairs now in May's own room; the girl was clad in floating robes of pink silk, trimmed with soft old lace, a string of rare pearls on her neck, white roses in her hair.

Susan seemed not to heed the question.

"Who is it, nurse?"

"It's a stranger, deary," said the old woman, in a strange, faltering voice; "one whose name even you have never heard."

"Is it Captain Pearson?"

Susan's whole frame shook.

"Dear, dear, child!" she said, brokenly;

"have you known about all it this time, and yet can you be as happy as you look? Why, Lady May, many's the night I've cried myself to sleep just for thinking of this day."

"I don't understand," said May, in a strange, far-off sort of voice. "Susan, what do you mean! Tell me plainly who is the gentleman downstairs!"

"Captain Pearson, my lady," said Susan, quickly; "that is, he calls himself a captain. Anyhow, it's the man the Earl means you to marry."

May Glenarvon felt years older after that announcement. She was calm outwardly, but she could hear the throbbing of her own heart as she went forward to meet her father's guest.

A stout, thick-set young man, with a bullet-shaped head and a strong nasal accent—a man whose black clothes sat on him as some foreign element, who used his knife in inappropriate places, distributed his "h's" entirely in the wrong direction, and hopelessly slaughtered the Queen's English; the kind of man whom nothing will make presentable.

He sat at Lord Dunmore's table looking infinitely less aristocratic than the butler; he made the most absurd mistakes in the observances of the table; he talked incessantly, and Lady May took heart.

If the wooer had been eligible and irreproachable she might have trembled; but such a creature as this! Why, the sternest parent on earth could not force such a husband upon his daughter, and Lord Dunmore had ever been indulgent.

Only when the guest, confessing himself "done up" with his journey, had been conducted to his room, Mrs. Glenarvon lingered talking to her father. At first she spoke only of indifferent things, then

suddenly she looked up into his face and asked him—

"Papa, why did that man come here?"

"I asked him, May!"

"But why?"

A long, long silence; his hesitation redoubled her fears. Putting one hand on his arm and clinging to him nervously, she murmured—

"Papa, tell me just this—you don't want him to marry me! Father, say just one word that I may know you did not want this. Oh! the very thought of it is awful."

But the word did not come, and looking up May saw a tear stealing slowly down the Earl's furrowed cheek.

CHAPTER IV.

FACE to face they stood, the two who loved each other—May pale and downcast, Denis proud and happy. Captain Pearson's visit was a week old now, and the state of things at home was getting more than May could bear. She had met Denis this time by appointment, and now she was telling him why.

"I must say good-bye; I couldn't bear to leave you without a word."

"Good-bye!" he repeated, horror-struck.

"May, what are you thinking of, child?"

"We can never be anything to each other."

"You mean you are going to throw me over for Captain Pearson, I suppose?"

"Don't be angry with me. Oh, Denis! I have enough to bear without harsh words from you."

"Sweetheart, tell me all, only first give me one word of hope. You won't marry this scorpion!"

"I shall never marry anyone."

"Never anyone but me," he corrected. "May, I won't interrupt you again, I promise."

"I told papa last night I could never marry Captain Pearson. Oh, Denis! I shall never forget it; he was so angry. He told me that I was destroying his life work, that I was bringing a cruel reproach on my mother's memory, besides blighting my own future."

"And you answered?"

"That I would rather beg my bread from door to door than marry Captain Pearson. I told him so myself this morning—Captain Pearson, I mean—and now he has gone away, and papa says he will take his revenge."

"It shall not touch you, darling. You shall be my wife, and I will guard you from this villain's malice. You can trust me, May?"

"I can trust you."

"And you will be my wife!"

"I can never be anyone's wife. Oh! Denis, don't you understand! Can't you guess the secret Captain Pearson will reveal to all the world now we have argued him?"

"I only know this, May, no secret in all the world should part two people who love each other."

"But this is such a fearful one!"

"Tell it me."

She turned her face away, and then, very low, and with an agony of shame she began her story—

"When my father married my mother she was not really Countess of Dunmore. He had, they say, another wife living. The mistake was repaired for my mother the day after this woman died. My parents were privately remarried, so that mamma died Lady Dunmore; but I—Denis, don't you understand what it means to me?"

"I understand; it removes the real obstacle between us. You are not a countess in prospective, and so it is not such a woeful *mésalliance* for you to marry a plain hard-working artist."

"Denis!"

"What else did you expect me to say, sweetheart?"

"Don't you see what it makes me?"

"It makes you the victim of a cruel mistake—that is all, even if it were true."

"It is true, Denis. I am not Lady May Glenarvon in the eyes of the law; I never have been."

Denis gathered her to himself.

"So that you are my wife, May, I don't mind what other title you bear."

She nestled in his arms, as though she had found her true resting-place at last.

"Denis!"

"What is it, May?"

"Do you know I think I'm glad?"

"Of what, child?"

"That it will all be found out. You see if I had been my father's heiress—if some day I had been called Lady Dunmore—I should have been stealing both title and estates from my cousin. If it weren't for the misery to papa and the disgrace I could be very thankful. I don't mind owing anything to you, and it would be dreadful to steal a title and fortune never really mine."

"I don't think Mrs. Pearson will ever publish her story," said Denis, gravely. "In fact, I feel sure of it, May."

"Papa said she would go at once to the next heir, my uncle's only son."

"And then?"

"She would tell him, and he would come here to insist upon his rights."

"I don't think he will."

"I ought to be very miserable," said May, simply, "only I can't. Denis, I can't even feel unhappy while you love me."

"Then you will be happy always, dear," he replied, fondly; "for my love shall never fail you—never, while you live."

That evening Denis presented himself at the Kensington and asked for Lord Dunmore.

The Earl had heard from May of her meeting with her lover.

"You know all," he asked, as he took the young man's hand, "and you still wish to marry my child, Mr. Thomas?"

"I know all, and it is still my dearest wish to marry May. My means are not large, Lord Dunmore. I can settle five thousand pounds upon my wife, and if I continue to prosper in my profession I can surround her with every luxury!"

"May will not go to her husband penniless," said the Earl, gravely. "From the day I discovered my misfortune I set to work to save something for my child, in case the truth ever was discovered. I can give May a handsome dowry—I cannot give her my name!"

"I know you look on me as the cause of your disappointment," said Denis, gravely; "but ask yourself, could the child have been happy as Captain Pearson's wife even had we never met? Would he have been her choice?"

The Earl sighed.

"No; yet I can't help regretting what must follow. In three days' time my nephew will know he is heir at law to my estates. Do you think I can be resigned when I know that my own story and my poor wife's will be public property?"

"I think you are too credulous. I don't believe Mrs. Pearson will fulfil her threat. I am sure to be the first to hear of it if she does!"

"How so?"

"I must run over to England on business, and I am sure to see something of Mrs. Glenarvon and her family. I shall only be away about a week. When I return here I shall beg you to give me May!"

"Not at once?"

"At once! I want to be able to protect her from all alander before Mrs. Pearson proclaims that she is 'nobody's daughter.' I want the world to know that she is my wife!"

The first news that met Denis Glenarvon on reaching his Chelsea lodgings was to learn that a woman had called two or three times to see him.

She said her business was of the utmost importance, and her name was Mrs. Pearson. Further particulars she would not vouchsafe.

Just as he expected, she called again the day after his arrival, and, by his orders, was shown into his studio.

She began the interview by saying she had a secret to impart to him worth a large sum of money. What price was he prepared to offer for the information?

"Nothing!"

"You don't understand," persisted the woman. "It would make a rich man of you!"

"I have ample for my wants."

"You'd be 'somebody' then, I can tell you!"

"And I have no desire to be."

She was nonplussed. Denis looked at her coldly, and said—

"Before you came to offer your secret to me, would it not have been better to resign the pension you are receiving from Lord Dunmore?"

She stared.

"The Earl and I are close friends," went on Mr. Glenarvon, gravely. "I don't suppose there is a secret in his whole life he has not told me. I don't see your right to meddle in our family concerns, but I don't mind telling you I am engaged to his only child!"

Mrs. Pearson sat down. She looked like a creature struck "all of a heap."

"I hope Lord Dunmore may be spared for many a year," went on Denis, fiercely. "At his decease the title and estates will descend to my wife and myself. It would puzzle even you, I fancy, to discover a nearer heir than his daughter and his brother's son!"

Mrs. Pearson felt that fate was against her.

"One thing more," said Denis, slowly. "Lord Dunmore and I both know you are powerless to do us any real harm. It is not likely any slanders a woman like you might invent would be believed; but I am authorised to tell you, that as the Earl shrinks from his story being food for idle gossip, the income you now enjoy will be continued, and will revert to your brother at your death, provided you refrain from talking of our family history!"

Mrs. Pearson glared at him. She was bitterly disappointed at the result of her morning's work.

She would have liked to defy Mr. Glenarvon, but her assured income was a good bit to resign for the indulgence of petty spite; besides, she knew perfectly the sting was taken out of her story. Nothing she could say would really harm Lady May when once the girl was married to her cousin.

Very sulkily, therefore, she condescended to intimate to Mr. Glenarvon that she meant to hold her tongue. She and Jem would go back to America, and she would trouble Lord Dunmore to send the income out to them there, and then she took her departure.

Denis did not pause in England to visit his mother and sisters. He wrote to Lord Dunmore announcing his return to Germany, but a letter from the Earl arrived, saying he should like his daughter to be married in his native land.

The clergyman who had performed her mother's second marriage was still alive. For many reasons it would be well that he should unite his daughter to the lover of her choice.

Denis agreed. He went down to the remote Monmouthshire village spoken of by the Earl, and sought out Mr. Granville. In two minutes he had recalled the whole circumstances to his mind—in half-an-hour he had confided his own secret to him, and the two were firm friends.

"Your sentiments do you honour, Mr. Glenarvon," said the clergyman, kindly. "I shall be delighted to perform your wedding."

"Hush!" said Denis, smiling. "Mr. Thomas, if you please. May is quite capable of sending me to the rightabout if she knew the fraud I am practising upon her."

As "Mr. Thomas" he welcomed May and her father—as Mr. Thomas he escorted them to the Vicarage, where they were to be Mr. Granville's guests until the wedding-day. Only in the licence was he described by his true name.

The Vicar, entering heart and soul into his plans, discreetly dropped a piece of blotting-paper over the bridegroom's signature in the register before he invited May for the last time to write her maiden name.

There was a very pleasant little breakfast at the Vicarage; then while May was putting on her travelling attire, her father and husband found themselves *de à l'écart*.

"She is safe now!" breathed Denis. "This morning's ceremony has defeated Mrs. Pearson's malice for ever."

The Earl shook his head.

"She is an honest man's wife, but she is nobody's daughter! The truth will out yet, Denis. As soon as Thomas Glenarvon's son hears the truth he will assert his rights."

"He will never do so!" returned Denis, gravely. "He loves May too well!"

"Loves May? Why he never saw her!"

"He is her husband! Forgive me, Uncle Guy; I would not tell you before. I might have lost her if I had. Your child may not be legally Lady May, but she is May Glenarvon as truly as though she had been born so. Some day, not a very distant one I trust, she will be Countess of Dunmore!"

"Deus!"

"As he wrung the young man's hand how he blessed him!"

"It is all right," said Denis, gladly. "Some people may call me a fortune-hunter, but I think I can bear even that for her dear sake!"

He never had to bear it. No one who saw the young couple together ever doubted that their marriage was one of anything but mutual love.

Whilst they were on their honeymoon Lord Dunmore exerted himself to call on all his old intimates, and make interest with those high up in politics, and by their help he gained the one thing needful to complete his happiness.

The Queen graciously consented that on his death his son-in-law should be Earl of Dunmore, and enjoy all the privileges of the peerage as fully as though he had been born Viscount Glenarvon.

That last point settled, a time of tranquil happiness dawned for the old nobleman. He lived to see Denis famous throughout the land. He lived to nurse May's children—children for whose future he need have no fear—who were born to the name and rank he had once feared their mother must be deprived of.

And May and her husband—they are lovers still.

The world admits that Lord and Lady Dunmore are among its happiest couples; even Mrs. Thomas Glenarvon and her six spinster daughters have been unable to find a flaw in the domestic felicity of the household at The Towers, where Susan reigns supreme, especially in the autumn season, when, leaving children, friends, and gaiety, the married lovers like to cross to the Continent and spend a few happy days at Königsmaad, the dreamy German village whose legend gave to Denis undying fame, and which is dearer still, both to him and his wife, because in that quaint spot he first met and loved Lady May.

[THE END.]

IF I BUT KNEW.

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CHAPTER XL.—(continued.)

"You do not lift your voice to deny it," Mark cried bitterly. "Heaven help me, it is too true! No more need be said. You shall not be tortured by hearing another word of love from my lips. They shall hereafter be dumb, though it tortures me to madness. Oh, Heaven—oh, Heaven, why should some men gain love only to cast it aside as a broken, withered flower when they have gathered all its sweet fragrance, while other men, worthy of a better fate, go hungering through all their weary lives for that same love which they would have cherished until the last hour of their honest lives, only to have Heaven deny it to them? Is it just, is it fair, I ask? Oh, Rhoda, I am a rough fellow, I know, hardly suited for a sweet, dainty girl like you, but I would never have broken your tender little heart and then deserted you."

"Don't, Mark, don't!" sobbed the girl. "Let me go out of your life quietly and as quickly as I can. You will learn to forget me, and bless Heaven that I did not take you at your word. But promise me first that you will always think of me as I was when—I was earning my living in the telegraph office here, and—and that I was more sinned against than sinning."

His brow darkened. He clenched his great strong hands together, the veins stood out like whipcords on his white forehead, his keen, honest blue eyes shot flame as he cried, hoarsely:

"I cannot take you against your will, I cannot persuade you to love me, because I see too well you have no heart to give me, and this knowledge has wrecked my life. But hearken to my words, Rhoda Cairn, and heed them well. I will go to the end of the earth to find this villain who has wrought you this mighty sorrow, and when we meet I shall wreak such vengeance upon him as man never met with before; for every pang of anguish he has made you suffer he shall suffer twofold. My vengeance shall be so swift, so sure, so terrible, that it will startle the whole world as it has never been startled before, and it may be a warning to these smooth, aristocratic villains who have outraged Heaven by breaking pure young girls' hearts."

In an instant she was on her knees at his feet, sobbing wildly:

"Oh, no, Mark for Heaven's sake, don't harm him! If you strike a blow at him, you will pierce my heart before it reaches his. Be merciful, as you are just. Grant me this prayer; it is the only one I have ever asked of you. You say you love me. If you do, you would not want to do anything that would bring torture to me such as that will be if you carry out your threat."

He looked at her fixedly.

"I have taken a vow that I would avenge your wrongs when I come face to face with the man who is responsible for them," he replied, "and I cannot break a vow that is registered in Heaven—even for you—no, not even—for you!"

She turned from him with a wild, bitter sob, so bleak, so piteous, that it rang in his ears for long, weary years afterwards, crying out:

"Last night I cried out to Heaven that I had nothing to live for; now I see the work that He has for me to do. I must save Kenward Monk from your vengeance, for Heaven help me, despite all he has done, I love him still, and will so love him until I close my eyes in death. If you harmed one hair of his head, I should want them to kill you! Do you hear me? I—I should want them to kill you! That is how women love. Oh, do not make me say any more, only let me go from here in peace—and—and wishing you well instead of—of—hating—and—and fearing you. That is my cloak hanging up in the telegraph office yonder. May I take it and go?" she added pathetically.

"I will fetch it to you," he answered in a very husky, tremulous voice.

She did not see that he very dexterously transferred some gold from his own pocket to the inside pocket of the long, dark cloak.

She took the garment from him in silence. At that moment they heard the far-off shriek of the on-coming express.

"Will you take that train?" he asked, as she started for the door. His face was very pale, and his hands trembled.

"I haven't any money. I shall walk there," she replied, faintly.

He pressed a ticket and a few coins into her hand.

"Don't refuse them. Take them as a loan if you will not accept them as a gift," he cried, anxiously.

"I will take them as—as a loan," the girl answered, choking back a piteous sob, "and—and when I earn the amount, I—I—will send it back to you."

"One moment more!" he cried, hoarsely.

"Always remember, Rhoda, that you leave behind you a heart that beats only for you—only for you. No other woman's face shall ever win my love from you. I will wait here, where you leave me, for long years, until you come back to me—ay, I will wait from day to day with this one hope in my heart: Some time she will come back to me; she will find the world too cold and hard, and will come back to me to comfort her. I will watch for you from darkness until the day dawns again. My form, so straight now, may grow bent with years, my hair grow white, and lines seam my face, but through it all I shall watch for your coming until Heaven rewards my vigilance. Good-bye, and Heaven bless you, Rhoda Cairn, oh, love of my heart!"

She passed from his sight with those words ringing in her ears, and when the London express passed on again after she had got in, the young station-master fell prone upon his face to the floor, and lay there like one dead.

CHAPTER XII.

Few passengers turned to look at the little figure that entered the carriage at the wayside station at so early an hour of the morning, and Rhoda cowered quickly down into a corner seat. The clothes under the long dark cloak were saturated, but no one could see that, nor notice how damp and matted were the curling rings of dark hair which the hood of the cloak but half concealed. The hours crept on as the express whirled over the rails; but Rhoda paid no heed to time.

But hunger at last began to tell upon her, and she eagerly hailed a boy who passed the carriage window with a basket of sandwiches on his arm.

She looked at the coins she still held loosely in her hand, and found to her dismay that, with the exception of two pieces of silver, she held a handful of gold sovereigns.

"His salary," she sobbed. "Oh, if I had known that, I would have refused to take it; but—but I will work and earn money, and—and pay him back double their value. Poor fellow—poor fellow!" and she laid her face on the window-sill, sobbing as though her heart would break.

Suddenly she heard a voice in the seat at the back of her say:

"You seem very much distressed, poor girl. Is there any way in which I can serve you?"

The deep, musical voice was so kind, so humane, so sympathetic, that Rhoda turned around with a start to see who it was who had asked the question.

She saw directly behind her a fair, handsome young man who had evidently just entered the carriage, and who was depositing his portmanteau and umbrella in the rack above his head.

At the first glance a faint shriek broke from her lips. She was just about to cry out, "Kenward Monk—great Heaven!—do we meet again!" when she saw her error in time. Although bearing a certain resemblance to the lover who had so cruelly betrayed her, a second glance told her it was not he.

It was a moment ere she recovered herself sufficiently to answer, then she faltered, piteously:

"I am in sorrow, sir, so great that I do not think any young girl but me could ever pass through it—and live."

"I do not wish to pry into your private affairs," said the young man, courteously, "but I wish to repeat, if you will tell me what troubles you, and I can be of service to you, I shall be only too pleased. Although a stranger, you will find me worthy of your confidence, my poor child!"

There was something about the handsome, kindly, blue-eyed young man that caused Rhoda's heart to go out to him at once. His was a face that women always trusted, and no one had ever had cause to regret it.

"I am going to London in search of work," faltered the girl, clasping her little hands closely together.

"That is certainly reason enough to weep," he replied, earnestly. "May I ask if you have friends there to whom you are going until you can find employment?"

Rhoda shook her head, her breast heaved, her white lips quivered, while great tears welled up to the great dark eyes, so like purple velvet panes drowned in rain.

"I have no friends—no one. I am all alone in the world, sir," she sobbed. "My mother is dead—dead. I have just left her grave. She and I were all in all to each other; now she is gone, and I—oh, only the angels know that no sorrow is so bleak, so pitiful, so awful, as to be all alone in the world."

"I can understand the situation perfectly," he answered in a low voice, "and I can pity you. Although not quite alone in the world myself, I am almost as badly off. But to return to your—"

self: I may be able to serve you. What kind of employment were you intending to search for? In some shop, or dress-making or millinery establishment?" he queried.

She looked blankly up into his fair, handsome, earnest face.

"I do not know how to do anything of that kind," she answered, simply. "I thought perhaps I might find employment in some type-writing office."

"Why, yes, indeed. I wonder that that idea did not occur to me before. I will give you a note to a friend of mine, who is in that line himself, and I have no doubt he will do all in his power to aid you, providing he has a vacancy."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times, sir," cried Rhoda, thankfully; "I shall be so grateful—oh, so very grateful!"

"Mind, it is not a certainty, you know," admonished the stranger, earnestly; "I can only write the letter. But that is not assuring you of a situation—we can only hope for it."

He tore out a leaf from his memorandum-book, and taking a gold pencil from his vest-pocket, hastily jotted down a few lines upon it.

"I am sorry I am not going through to London, otherwise I would take you there myself," he said, courteously, as he folded up the note and handed it to her.

At that moment his station was reached. He had barely time to touch his hat to her, gather up his parcels, and alight, ere the train moved out again. The young man looked after it, and the sweet, tearful young face pressed against one of the windows until it was out of sight.

"By all that is wonderful!" he ejaculated in a very troubled voice, "I am almost positive that I forgot to sign my name to that note, and it was written so badly on that jolting car, Harcourt won't be able to make it out or know whose writing it is. Poor little girl! I hope she will find a position there. What a terrible thing it is to be young and desolate and beautiful and to have to find work in the great wicked city of London! She is so young, guileless, and innocent, I hope no ill will befall her. I must remember to look up my friend Harcourt to learn if he gave her a post or not. I declare, if it were not that I am betrothed to the sweetest girl in all the world, I am afraid I should commit the desperate folly of falling in love with that beautiful, dark-eyed little stranger. Now that I think of it, it did not occur to me to even ask her name or where she was from."

His reverie was somewhat rudely interrupted by a hearty slap on the shoulder and a hearty voice calling out gayly,—

"Why, Kenward, how are you, old fellow? What, in the name of all that's amazing, brings you here?"

"Why, Hal, is this you?" cried the other, in astonishment and delight. "This is an additional pleasure, meeting my old college chum fully a thousand miles from where I would ever have imagined finding him. But a word in your ear, my dear boy. It's two years since you and I parted at college, old fellow, and a great deal has happened in that time. We will walk up the street while I inform you."

"With the greatest of pleasure, Kenward," returned his companion.

"Tut! tut! Don't call me Kenward—Kenward Monk. I'm that no longer, you know—no, I suppose you don't know; but that's exactly what I want to talk to you about."

"I am too astonished for utterance," declared his friend.

"Why, the explanation is certainly simple enough," declared the other, with a good-natured, mellow little laugh, adding, "Why, you, my college chum, knew what many another friend of mine does not know, namely, that there are two Kenward Monks, or, rather, there was up to the present year. It's a bit of secret family history; but I am obliged to take you into my confidence, in order that you may fully understand my most peculiar position. Two brothers, who were almost enemies born, married about the same time, and to each of the gentlemen—namely, my uncle and my father, was born a son—my cousin and myself."

"These gentlemen had an eccentric elder

brother who had money to burn, as the saying is, and what should each of these younger brothers do but name their sons after the wealthy old Kenward Monk, if you please, each hoping that his son would be the old uncle's heir."

"A pretty mess these two belligerent gentlemen made of the affair, I assure you. Two Kenward Monks, each resembling the other to an unpleasantly startling degree, of almost the same age, being born scarcely a week apart."

"We were constantly getting into all manner of scrapes, a case of being continually taken for the fellow that looks like me, as the song goes. Each disputed with the other the right to bear that name, and neither would put a handle to it or do anything to cause it to differ in any way from the cognomen of the famous old uncle, who was certainly quite as bewildered as any one else."

"As we two lads grew older, I took to books, my cousin to sports and the pretty faces of girls. When his folks died and he was left to follow the bent of his own inclination, in spite of my earnest admonition and my uncle's combined, he jumped the traces of home restraint altogether, and started out to see life on his own hook. The last I heard of him he was with some distant relative, clerking in a London commercial house."

"Now for my side of the story. From the hour he defied uncle and shook off his restraint, old Kenward Monk's hatred of him grew so bitter we dared not mention my wayward cousin, Kenward Monk, in his presence. My uncle actually forced me to change my name through legislative enactment to make it legal. He insisted upon naming me Owen Courtney, declaring that my cousin would be sure to disgrace the name of Kenward Monk through the length and breadth of the land before he stopped in his mad downward career."

"Well, to make a long story short, my uncle sent me to America on business for him, and his sudden death brought me hurriedly home this week, to find that he has left me his entire fortune, with the proviso that not one penny shall ever go to my cousin, who, in all probability, does not yet know of his sad plight."

"Now, last but by no means least, on the steamer coming back from New York I met a beautiful young girl, Miss Nina Graves. It was a case of love at first sight between us. You know I'm a very impulsive fellow. I proposed, and she accepted me on the spot; but, mind, she knows me as Owen Courtney, and so she shall know me to the end of her sweet life, bless her!"

"Now you know the whole story. Mind, I'm not Kenward Monk, but, instead, Owen Courtney, at your service."

"Nina is visiting here, so I ran up to see my sweetheart. Sounds like a romance or a comedy, doesn't it?"

"I hope there will be no tinge of tragedy in it," laughed his friend, thoughtlessly.

CHAPTER XIII.

WITH the note of introduction clutched tightly in her hand, Rhoda Cairn reached London. She took barely time to swallow a cup of coffee ere she hurried to the address indicated. Her heart sank within her as she looked up at the immense building; but with a courage which should have met with a better reward, she entered the lift, and soon found herself on the eighth floor, where the secretary's office was situated.

"He is not in," an attendant told her. "He left town two days ago, and is not expected to return for a fortnight."

Tears that she could not control sprang into Rhoda's dark eyes.

"Oh, what shall I do?" cried the girl; "I want to see him so much!"

The attendant was moved to pity by her great distress.

"If you are looking for a situation, or anything of that kind, perhaps I could suggest something."

"Oh, yes, that is it, sir," exclaimed Rhoda, looking up through her tears—"that is my errand. I want to secure a situation."

"Then it is the manager, instead of the secretary, you will have to apply to. I think he is in his office. Step this way, please."

He threw open a door to the right, and Rhoda followed him into a large room, in which were dozens of young girls bending over tables.

The deafening tap, tap, tap of the typewriters drowned every sound.

Some girls never raised their heads, as Rhoda, following the attendant, passed down the long aisle. Others, however, glanced at her, at first casually, which deepened instantly into a gaze of curiosity and intense interest, for they had never beheld a creature with such superb beauty. Their hearts beat with envy.

"The manager will be sure to engage her," they whispered. "Her pretty face will be sure to be a passport to favour. There used to be a time when it was 'How much do you know about the business?' but now it is 'What kind of a face have you? If it's a pretty and a dashing one, I'll engage you.' An old or plain girl doesn't stand any chance whatever now-a-days."

All unconscious of these remarks, Rhoda passed on. The attendant threw open another door at the end of the large room, and she found herself in a luxuriously furnished office. A young and exceedingly handsome man sat at a desk writing. He glanced up angrily at the sound of footsteps, and was about to make a sharp remark to the man, when he caught sight of the beautiful young creature he was ushering into his presence.

"Ah! sit down," he said, blandly; "I will attend to you in one moment."

The attendant had scarcely closed the door behind him ere the manager—for such he proved to be—turned quickly about and faced the young girl.

"What can I do for you?" he said in his blindest voice. He had taken in at the first glance the wondrous beauty of the young girl. It was certainly the most exquisite face he had ever beheld, and a strange gleam leaped into his eyes. He told himself that, from her appearance, she had certainly come in search of a position. Rhoda Cairn looked up into the dark, handsome face. Instinctively she shrank from him, but could not tell why. Very timidly she stated her errand, the colour on her face deepening, as she could not help but notice the ardent glance of admiration he bent upon her, and there was something in the bold glance of his eyes that made her feel extremely uncomfortable.

In a faltering voice Rhoda stated her errand, and what experience she had had in her little village home. To her great delight and surprise, he answered quickly:

"I think I shall be able to make a place for you. It would be a pity to send away such a pretty girl as you are."

Rhoda drew back in alarm. She did not like the remark, nor the look which accompanied it; but she dared not make an indignant reply.

"Where are you stopping?" he asked in the next breath.

"I have but just reached the city, sir," she responded. "I came in search of a situation even before I found a place to stop."

"It is well you did so," he responded, quickly. "I know of a place that I think will suit you. The lady has no other boarders. You would be company for her. I would make this observation here and now: the girls we have here are a talkative set. Pay no attention to their remarks."

He wrote an address on a slip of paper, and handed it to the girl.

"I am very grateful, sir, for the interest you have taken in me, a poor girl," she said, tremulously. "Shall I report to-day for work, sir?" she asked. "I should like to commence as soon as possible."

"To-morrow will do," he answered.

With a heart full of thanks, she left the office. Horace Tempest, the manager, looked after her with a smile that was not pleasant to see.

"I have run across many a little beauty in my time," he muttered, gazing after her, "but surely never such an exquisite little beauty as this one."

The girls looked at one another, nodding grimly,

when Rhoda Cairn presented herself for duty the next day.

"Didn't I tell you how it would be?" sneered one of the girls. "Our handsome manager, Mr. Tempest, was captivated by the girl's beauty, as I knew he would be, and engaged her, although he refused to take on, only the day before, three girls whom I knew to be actually starving."

There was one girl who looked at Rhoda with darkening eyes.

"In spite of the fuss we had last night over the doll-faced girl who came out of his office, he has engaged her. He said he did not admire her style of beauty. Well, time will tell. If I see anything like a flirtation between them, that girl will rue the hour she ever entered this establishment."

She bent over her task; but though the hours passed, the terrible look never left her face.

"Belle is jealous," more than one girl whispered to her neighbour. "You see, she's head over heels in love with our manager. If he so much as looks at any other girl that passes by, she sulks for a week. What fun it would be to make her jealous! Oh, let's try, girls! It would be such fun!"

"Not for the new-comer!" laughed another girl. "Belle would make it pretty hot for her here."

Little dreaming of the tempest they were stirring up, the girls thoughtlessly planned their little joke. Their shouts of laughter would have been turned into tears of pity could they have beheld the harvest of woe that was to spring from it.

Belle Andrews noticed that the beautiful new-comer was assigned to typewriting at a table almost directly opposite the private office. This inflamed the jealousy of Belle.

She noted how he watched her from the window of his office all the next day.

More than one girl called Belle's attention to this at noon-hour.

"You will have to look to your laurels, Belle," more than one declared, banteringly. "You will find this Rhoda Cairn a rival, I fear."

"Any girl had better be dead than attempt to be a rival of mine," she answered.

There came a time when the girls remembered that remark all too forcibly.

Rhoda bent over her task, paying little attention to anything around her. She was trying to forget her double sorrow, all that she had gone through, and the death of her poor mother that had followed.

She wanted to forget those few bright weeks at Brighton, those weeks when she had tasted a cup filled to the brim with happiness. In her borrowed plumes she had dared to love, and this was the outcome of it—the sorry ending of the saddest story that a young girl ever had to tell.

But the greatest sorrow of all was the remembrance of that terrible letter, that scorched like fire in her brain.

She had never forgotten the words: "The ceremony we went through was illegal. You are as free as air! Looking at the matter now, we can both see it was better so. As some people say, 'there is a fate in it.' Go back to your old life, and forget me!"

No wonder the burning tears rose to her eyes as she thought of the words. The man she had believed and trusted in had deserted her as thoughtlessly as a child would a cast-off toy. This one action had marred her whole life. Oh, the pity of it!

She had tried to hate the man who had so cruelly deserted her, but, ah me! the love which had sprung into her heart could not be crushed out at will.

And while she worked, with her head bent low over her task, the handsome manager still watched her from his private office.

"The more one looks at her the more beautiful she seems!" he muttered. "If I were not doing my best to capture a beautiful young girl and her thousands, I would marry this little beauty in a trice. But pshaw! I am a fool to even think of marrying a poor girl, let alone putting the thought into execution. It is well enough for one of these wealthy fellows to marry a poor girl; but when I tie the matrimonial knot, there

must be a bag of gold which will outweigh the bride."

And yet, even after he had told himself all that, he could not take his eyes from the fatally fair face that had so enthralled him.

"Why are the most beautiful girls generally born poor," he muttered, "and the rich ones, nine out of ten, ugly almost beyond endurance? My intended—the heiress—is an exception to the rule; but she does me the honour of disliking me most cordially, I feel confident."

In this way a week passed. The handsome manager became so infatuated with Rhoda that the girls could not help noticing it. Ere a fortnight had passed, everyone in the building was gossiping over it. The girls were rather afraid to joke Belle Andrews about it any more, for the greyish pallor that overspread her face when the subject was brought up warned them that they were playing with edged tools.

The quiet way in which she took their jests rather alarmed them. She would give them a long, strange look, and turn away without a word. From being the jolliest, most fun-loving girl in all the building, she suddenly grew to be the most morose, answering only when she was spoken to by her companions, and then in monosyllables.

"I would not like to be Rhoda Cairn," said one of the girls; adding: "Don't you think we ought to let her know just how Belle is feeling over her flirtation with the handsome manager?"

"No!" cried one; "let the fun go on!"

"I do not believe Rhoda is flirting with the manager," declared a quiet girl. "She does not even know he seems to be watching her hour after hour."

"Don't you believe it!" replied the other girl, with a sneer. "The only thing plays off indifference just to draw him on. She knows just how to make a fellow want her. We'll watch what comes of it."

(To be continued.)

THE shooting-fish is a native of the East Indies. It has a hollow cylindrical beak. It frequents the sides of the sea and rivers in search of food, from its singular manner of obtaining which it receives its name. When it spies a fly sitting on the plants that grow in shallow water, it swims to the distance of 4 ft., 5 ft., or 6 ft., and then, with remarkable dexterity, it ejects out of its tubular mouth a single drop of water, which seldom misses its aim, and striking the fly into the water, the fish makes it its prey.

THE first distinct mention of soap now extant is by Pliny, who speaks of it as an invention of the Gauls; but be that as it may, the use of soap for washing purposes is of great antiquity. In the ruins of Pompeii a complete soap manufactory was found, and the utensils and some soap were in a tolerable state of preservation. The Gallic soap of eighteen centuries ago was prepared from fat and wood ashes, particularly the ashes from beechwood, which wood was very common in France as well as in England. Soap is spoken of by writers from the second century, but the Saracens were the first people to bring it into general use as an external cleansing medium. The use of soap is thus described: "When examined chemically the skin is found to be composed of a substance analogous to dried white of egg, in a word albumen. Now, albumen is soluble in the alkalies, and when soap is used for washing the skin the excess of alkali combines with the oily fluid with which the skin is naturally bedewed, removes it in the form of an emulsion, and with it a portion of the dirt. Another portion of the alkali softens and dissolves the superficial stratum of the skin, and when this is rubbed off the rest of the dirt disappears. So that every washing of the skin with soap removes the old face of the skin and leaves a new one, and were the process repeated to excess the latter would become attenuated."

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EPPS'S

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FACETIÆ.

"GREAT invention, this painless dentistry."
"Yes; I wish some fellow would invent painless rheumatism."

TOMMY: "Uncle Bob, what is a pedestrian?"
Uncle: "Why, he's the fellow who makes a row when a bicycle runs over him."

"Who was that man to whom you bowed just now?" "I can't remember what his name is, but it seems to me I used to be engaged to him."

"You have basely deceived me. You told me when you married my daughter that you had money coming to you." "Well—I meant the money I would get by marrying her."

FARMER TURNIPS: "I heard that your son in Australia was coining money." Farmer Hays: "He was until the police got too sharp for him."

"SMOOSER, what would you do if a man called you a liar?" "Make him prove it, Verax, or lick him." "That's what I did." "Did you lick him?" "No."

"Isn't Mr. Damply light on his feet for a big man?" she asked of her escort who regards Mr. Damply as a rival. "Not a particle lighter than he is in his head."

ETHEL (sobbing): "I think it's an awful shame. That horrid Jones girl has been saying I paint." Maud: "Never mind, dear. If she had your complexion no doubt she'd paint, too."

STAGSTRUCK: "They say you were lucky in your last theatrical venture." Actor: "Yes, I was, somewhat so; was discharged the first day out, so I didn't have to walk back so far as the others did."

FORD MOTHER: "Tommy, dear, what did you buy with the money your grandpa gave you?" Tommy: "An unbreakable engine." "And where is it now?" "Oh, Jimmy Whittle smashed it."

Mrs. MORRIS PARK: "Mr. Rives is out a great deal at night, isn't he? My husband always spends his evenings at home." Mrs. Riverside Rives: "How kind of him! But then, you see, Riverside and I have such perfect confidence in each other."

"They say that Hendricks has been suffering from insomnia." "He has been, but he's all right now. He has discovered a wonderful cure." "What is it?" "He hires a boy to stay out in the hall all night, rap on the door every little while, and yell that it's time to get up."

OLD Peterby is rich and stingy. In the event of his death his nephew will inherit his property. A friend of the family said to the old gentleman: "I hear your nephew is going to marry. On that occasion you ought to do something to make him happy." "I will. I'll pretend that I am dangerously ill."

THE country editor is a reliable encyclopædia. A subscriber sent him this query recently: "What ails my hens? Every morning I find one or more of them keeled over, to rise no more." The reply was: "The fowls are dead. It is an old complaint, and nothing can be done except to bury them."

HOSTESS (at New Year's party): "And does your mother allow you to have two pieces of pie when you are at home, Willie?" Willie (who has asked for the second piece): "No, ma'am." Hostess: "Well, do you think she would like you to have two pieces here?" Willie (confidently): "Oh! she wouldn't care. This isn't her pie, you know."

LITTLE BOY (entering grocer's shop): "Please, sir, how much change would you give me out of a sovereign if I bought twelve pounds of sugar at twopence, two pounds of tea at eightpence, six pounds of rice at threepence, four pounds of candles at sixpence, and three pounds of fourpenny currants?" Grocer, thinking he has a large order, promptly added up the amount, and replied: "Eleven shillings and sixpence." "Thank you," said the boy, "that is the sum that I have got for my home lesson; now I'm sure of the answer!"

NERVOUS PHILANTHROPIST (on a slumming excursion): "Can you tell me if this is Little Erebus-street, my man?" Suspicious-looking Party: "Yes." Nervous Philanthropist: "Er—rather a rough sort of thoroughfare, isn't it?" Suspicious-looking Party: "Yes; it is a bit rough. The farther you go down, the rougher it gets. I lives in the last 'ouse." (Exit Philanthropist.)

DOUBTFUL PARTY (to gentleman): "Can you assist me, sir, to a trifle? I'm a stranger in a strange land, fifteen thousand miles from home." Gentleman: "My goodness! Where is your home?" Doubtful Party: "Australia." Gentleman (handing him a copper): "How do you ever expect to get back there?" "Well, if I don't do better than this, sir, I suppose I'll have to walk."

SEN: "I could have married either Whipper or Snapper if I'd wanted to, and both of those men whom I refused have since got rich, while you are still as poor as a church mouse." He: "Of course. I've been supporting you all these years. They haven't."

100 YEARS' REPUTATION. KEARSLEY'S FEMALE WIDOW WELCH'S PILLS.

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Medical Certificate sent with each Bottle.

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SOCIETY.

PARLIAMENT is to be opened by commission on Tuesday, February 8th, and the Council for the Speech from the Throne will be held by the Queen at Osborne on Saturday, February 5th. Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour will give full-dress parliamentary dinners on Monday the 7th.

The Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha will spend a month or six weeks in Egypt. The Duchess during his Royal Highness's absence will probably visit the Crown Prince and Princess of Roumania, who are at the Château Fabron at Nica.

The Emperor William has created a new medal as a souvenir of his grandfather. This medal is called "Kaiser Wilhelm Centenary Medaille," and will be distributed among 800,000 veterans. The bearers will each receive a diploma, on which will figure, among oak leaves, the portrait of William I. surmounted by a crown, with the inscription, "With God for King and Country."

It is understood at Berlin that the Imperial journey to Jerusalem is postponed until next year, and that the Emperor and Empress will proceed with their family at the end of February to Genoa, where they are to join the Imperial yacht for a six weeks' cruise in the Mediterranean, visiting Villefranche, Spezia, Naples, Palermo, Malta, and the coast of Spain. If the project is carried out, the Emperor and Empress will pay a brief visit to the Queen at Cimiza, and they are to have a meeting with the King and Queen of Italy, probably at Naples.

It is expected that the marriage between the Duke of Augustenburg, brother of the German Empress, and Princess Dorothea of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, daughter of Prince Philip, the owner of the great Kohary estate in Hungary, and granddaughter of the King of the Belgians, will take place about the middle of April. It is not yet settled whether the wedding is to take place at Berlin or Vienna. The Queen will be represented at the marriage by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and Prince and Princess Christian will also attend it.

The marriage of Princess Marie of Greece, daughter of the King and Queen of the Hellenes, and the Grand Duke George Michailovitch of Russia is to take place privately at Corfu, and the bride and bridegroom will proceed to Naples, and afterwards to the Riviera, arriving at St. Petersburg about the middle of March. This wedding has been postponed several times. Princess Alexandra, elder sister of Princess Marie, married the Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovitch, and died about a year afterwards. The Grand Duke George is the third son of the Grand Duke Michael Nicolaievitch, and a nephew of the Grand Duke of Baden and of the Dowager Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

ACCORDING to present arrangements there are to be five Levees this year at St. James's Palace, the first of which will be held by the Prince of Wales about Monday, February 14th. There is to be a second Levee in March, which will be held by either the Duke of Connaught or the Duke of York. There will be two more Levees between Easter and Whituntide, both held by the Prince of Wales, and His Royal Highness will probably hold the fifth also, which is to take place in the week before Ascot. The Prince of Wales is to receive the Corps Diplomatique at the first Levee of the season, at which there will be a great number of official presentations. It is in contemplation to limit the number of presentations at each Levee, in order to put an end to the manifold inconveniences which are occasioned by the present chaotic arrangements.

The festivities attendant on the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland, at which the Prince and Princess of Wales are to represent the Queen, will begin on September 3rd, almost immediately after her eighteenth birthday, when Amsterdam will be *en fête*. These festivities will consist of an allegorical procession of labour unions, a gala night at the theatres, illuminations and fireworks, also of an especial exhibition of the works of Rembrandt, of relics of the history of the House of Orange, and one of Dutch national costumes.

STATISTICS.

It is estimated that there are five hundred millions of sheep in the world, of which about one-tenth are in North America.

The Russian State sceptre is of solid gold, 3 feet long, and contains, among its ornaments, 263 diamonds, 360 rubies, and 15 emeralds.

PEKING, China, has an estimated population of 1,300,000, and 15,000 police, who signal from station to station by yelling until the news reaches headquarters.

STATISTICIANS claim that the earth will not support more than about 5,994,000,000 people. The present population is estimated at 1,467,000,000, the increase being 8 per cent. each decade. At that rate the utmost limit will be reached in the year 2072.

GEMS.

LIFE without liberty is joyless; but life without joy may be great. The greatness of life is sacrifice.

EVERY good doctrine leaves behind it an ethereal furrow ready for the planting of seeds which shall bring an abundant harvest.

GOOD nature is the very air of a good mind; the sign of a large and generous soul and the peculiar soil in which virtue prospers.

CONJECTURES are like sealed packages sold at auction; they often contain metal of value, and the chief consideration is that we need neither try nor buy them unless we wish.

THE doors of your soul are open on others and theirs on you. Simply to be in this world, whatever you are, is to exert an influence, an influence compared with which mere language and persuasion are feeble.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRIED CELERY.—Boil several heads of celery in salted water; when done, split the heads and dip them into clarified butter, or dip them into a batter and fry a light brown. Garnish the dish prettily with parsley.

DEVILLED TOASTED CHEESE.—Grate some cheese and pile it thickly upon some buttered toast, season with cayenne pepper, and place some pieces of butter on the cheese. Bake in the oven till nicely browned, or else set in a Dutch oven in front of a fierce clear fire.

CHOCOLATE CARAMELS.—Put one cup each of brown sugar, of treacle, and of milk, and one tablespoonful of glycerine into a kettle and boil fast. When nearly done, add one cup of grated chocolate and test by dropping a little into cold water. When done pour into buttered pans and cut into squares.

SWEET POTATO CROQUETTES.—Peel and boil six medium-sized sweet potatoes and when cold mash fine and mix with one tablespoonful of butter and two eggs. Season with half a teaspoonful of salt and a little white pepper; mix all together. Form into cork shape or into small balls. Dip into beaten egg and roll in bread crumbs. Fry in hot fat.

MUSHROOM KETCHUP.—To one gallon of stale, strong beer (the staler and stronger the better), add half a pound of anchovies, washed and cleaned from the guts, quarter of an ounce each of cloves and mace, the same quantity of pepper, three large pieces of root ginger, half a pound of shallots, and one quart or more of flat mushrooms, which have been rubbed and pickled in salt. Boil all these ingredients over a slow fire for one hour, then strain the liquor through a flannel bag and let it stand till perfectly cold, when it must be bottled and sealed very closely. The mushrooms should be wiped dry and arranged in layers with salt between, and kept for a few days, just as for any other recipe for ketchup.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PEARLS, unlike any other precious gems, are liable to decay.

THE hair grows considerably faster in summer than in winter.

THE Dutch people consume more tobacco per head than the people of any other country.

VIRGIL during the summer season filled his house with butterflies.

THE tautawa, a nine-inch-long lizard of New Zealand, is said to be the most sluggish animal in the world.

THE Japanese do not care much for novels. Among 27,000 new books printed last year only 462 were works of fiction.

WE are always responsible for the existence of every evil which we have the power to destroy.

THE value of the worn-out clothing returned into stores each year by the soldiers of the regular army is £50,000.

THE jelly-fish has no teeth, but uses himself as if he were a piece of paper when he is hungry, getting his food and then wrapping himself about it.

A movement is now on foot having for its object the security of a complete census of the inhabitants of all the civilized countries of the world.

THE biggest beetle in the world flourishes in Venezuela. It is known as the "elephant beetle," and a full-grown one weighs about half a pound.

THE wives of Siamese noblemen cut their hair so that it sticks straight up from their heads. The average length of it is about an inch and a half.

ON every shilling turned out the Mint makes a profit of nearly threepence. On every ton of penny-pieces taken out from the Mint there is a profit of £382.

A NEW invention to prevent cast plates and strips of iron from curling as they become cool has two series of clamps arranged at opposite ends of the machine to grasp the ends of the strips and prevent their contracting.

IN Holland women and persons of either sex under the age of sixteen are now forbidden to begin work earlier than five a.m., or to continue at work after seven p.m.; nor may their work exceed eleven hours a day in all.

SUNKEN vessels can be easily raised from the bottom of the ocean by means of a new device consisting of flexible bags inserted in the vessel, and filled with air through pipes attached to an air-pump on the deck of the wrecking boat.

IMPALING was used as a punishment in Turkey up to 1855. The last man so executed were four Arab sheikhs who had rebelled. They were impaled at the four corners of the Bagdad bridge. One of them lived for nine days.

IN Austria the man who loses both his hands in an accident can claim the whole of his life insurance money, on the grounds that he has lost the means of maintaining himself. Loss of the right hand reduces the claim from 70 to 80 per cent. of the total.

THE longest reach of railway without a curve is claimed by travellers to be that of the Argentine Pacific Railway, from Buenos Ayres to the foot of the Andes. For 211 miles it is without a curve, and has no cutting or embankment deeper than two or three feet.

AMONG the Siamese the curious custom obtains of reversing the elbow-joint of the left arm as a sign of superiority. The children of both sexes are trained to reverse their elbow in this painful position at an early age, if their parents are persons of high grade.

IT is a mistake to suppose that the tip of the tongue is the most sensitive part of the body. Those engaged in polishing billiard balls, or any other substances that require a very high degree of smoothness, invariably use the cheekbone as their touchstone for detecting any roughness.



STRONG ARMS are NOT NECESSARY

to do the washing when

Sunlight Soap . . .

is used; it does nearly all the work itself. Just rub a little on the clothes, roll them up and put them back in the water. Then when you take them out you will see that

Sunlight Soap does the work.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

IGNORANT.—"Equal-lor," "con-strew," "ac-cos-erles."

INQUIRER.—If the fall was your own fault, you have no claim.

V. G.—A gold ring is not indispensable to a marriage ceremony.

FRANK.—A squint will debar you from service in army or navy.

A. L.—Transportation was superseded by penal servitude in 1853.

B. R.—Lauter-matches were first made nearly seventy years ago.

CAUTION.—Liverpool-street Station is, we believe, the largest in England.

JESSE A. GAFFITH.—The Bank of England does not now issue £1 notes.

BERTIE.—Silver is legal tender up to two pounds, and copper up to one shilling.

E. M.—The girl may marry in the name by which she has always been known.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—"O tempora! O mores!" means, "Oh, the times! oh, the manners!"

INTERESTED.—As we never previously heard of the person, it is not in our power to give you any information.

ARTIE.—The principal Crown jewels are kept in the Tower of London, where they are exhibited to the public.

J. S.—If the will is properly signed and witnessed, it is not necessary that it should be drawn up by a lawyer.

WORRIED JEN.—If you have not implicit confidence in the young lady, you had better break off the connection.

RON.—Boring a hole half way through the sole of a shoe is said to prevent its squeaking. The reason assigned is that the air between the layers of leather is released by the boring.

ILL USER.—If the engagement was recognised and admitted before the twenty-first birthday, although entered into before, an action for breach of promise might be taken.

JAMIE.—Whatever soap is used in laundering clothes should not be too lavishly applied. Good bar soap that has been well dried is most satisfactory. All ends and thin pieces should be saved to melt for washing day.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—Lemon juice rubbed into the scalp with the finger tips is said to be an excellent restorer and cleanser.

BESSIE.—We should be inclined to think he loves you, or, as you say, he would not take so much interest in you. But have a care, and make sure it is not a selfish and unworthy interest.

HARD WORKED.—Any woman doing her work may so systematize it that it will be the easiest possible for her. She need not follow any other person's methods unless they are the very best for her own conditions.

THE QUIET HOUSE.

Oh, mothers, worn and weary
With cares that never cease,
With never time for pleasure,
With days that have no peace;
With little hands to hinder,
And feeble steps to guard,
With tasks that lie unfinished,
Deem not your lot too hard.

I know a house where playthings
Are hidden out of sight;
No sound of childish footsteps
Is heard from morn till night
No tiny hands to litter,
That pull all things awry;
No baby hurts to pity
As the quiet days go by.

And she, the sad-eyed mother—
What would she give to-day
To feel your cares and burdens,
To walk your weary way?
And happy she, you blessed,
Could she again but see
The rooms all strowed with playthings,
And the children round her knee!

JOHN.—It is out of the question for anyone to give the value of hair without seeing it. So much depends upon its evenness and firmness that the purchaser would have to see it in order to estimate its price.

MAUDIE.—It would not do at all for you to ask him what his "intentions" are. Your father is the proper person to discharge that duty. But wait a little longer.

BAUCE.—The verdict of "not proven" in Scotland is just as conclusive as the verdict of "not guilty" in England; the individual released under it cannot be put forward on same charge again, no matter what new evidence is got against him.

PEEZLED DAIRY.—You might present him with books, current literature, popular novels or historical books; consult his taste, which you should know by this time, or give him neckties, scarf pins or articles for his toilet table. Very few young men are overstocked with dainty toilet articles.

A. S.—There is no certain way of destroying worms in wood; some attempt it by going over the wood and putting small drops of carbolic acid in all the visible holes, then applying a coat of pure copal varnish over all; but the better plan, when worms have shown themselves in one part only of an article, is to take out the bit of wood and replace it with healthy material.

ELIZA.—Gelatine is not at all necessary for potted head; it would be quite foolish to use it; there is plenty of gelatine in the head; all it needs is good boiling to bring it out, when it will become quite firm when cold; neither is gelatine necessary or good for apple-jelly; there is plenty of vegetable gelatine in ripe apples to make their jelly quite firm; get a good recipe and use ripe apples, and nothing more is needed; gelatine, however, would in neither case be injurious, it would only be nasty.

HILDA.—One ought never to rub or press the fingers against the eyes. If they feel at all irritable, sponge them with cold water. Cold water has a most beneficial effect upon the eyes, and the strongest will find it good to daily bathe the eyes in cold water. This invigorates them and helps to keep them in good working order. But it must be remembered that quite cold water should only be used when the body is at a moderate temperature. When one is very heated or warm, the chill must be taken off the water to avoid any sudden shock.

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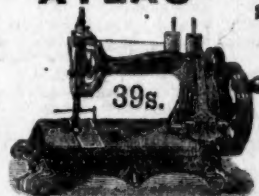
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